Everybody's

NUMBER TWO FEBRUARY, 1924 VOLUME FIFTY

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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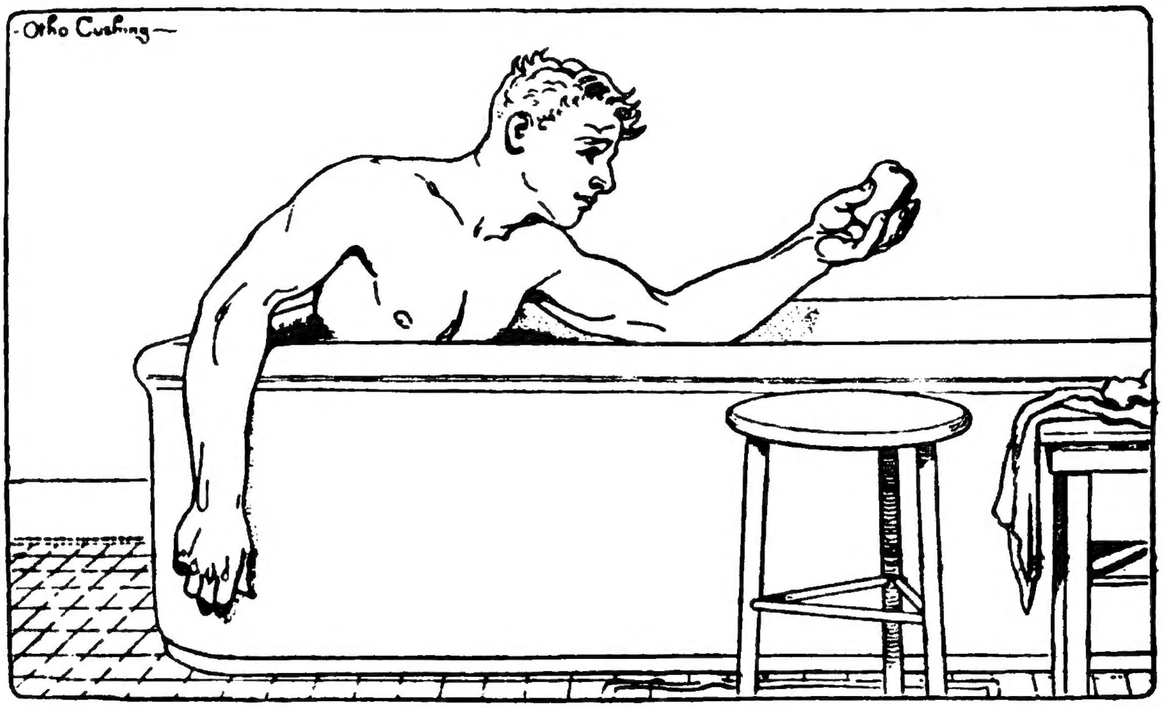
To men who bathe in hope instead of lather



There are Ivoryless men in this country!

There are men who still go along from day to day deep-sea-diving in the tub for a sunken, slippery parallelopiped. When they finally retrieve it and rub it heartily against their manly frames, it reluctantly deposits a thin, sticky coating that they, in all innocence, think is lather.

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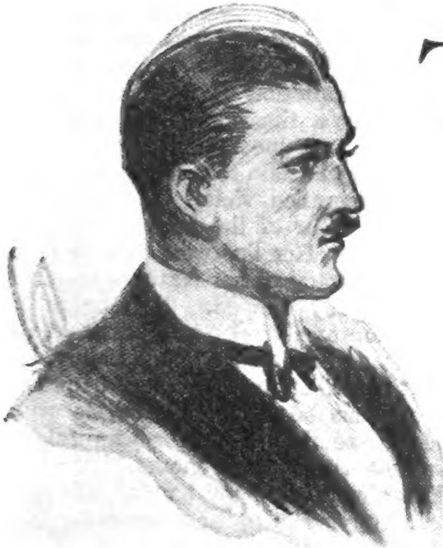
Everybody's

Vol. 50, No. 2 FEBRUARY, 1924 SEWELL HAGGARD, EDITOR

The Startling Story of a New World



The Wrath *to* Come

By

E. Phillips Oppenheim

Illustrations by Harley E. Stivers

IT IS a passage which might well be haunted with memories of the famous courtesans, dignitaries, criminals and aristocrats of the world—the long straight stretch of passage leading from the Hôtel de Paris to the International Sporting Club of Monte Carlo. Nevertheless it seemed to Grant Slattery a strange place for this meeting which, during his last two years' wandering about Europe, he had dreaded more than anything else on earth. Complete recognition came slowly. Each slackened speed as the distance between them diminished.

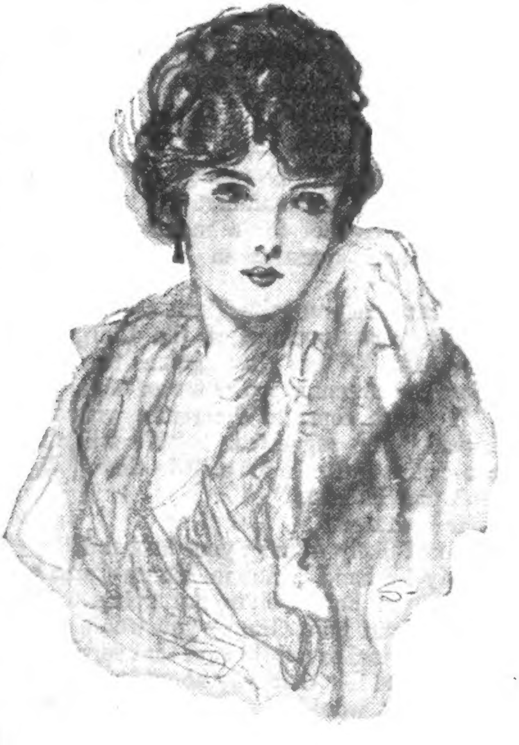
"Gertrude!" he exclaimed.

"Grant!" she murmured.

The purely automatic exercise of the conventional greeting helped him at first through what must at any time have been a bitter and terrible moment. For though Grant Slattery had every quality which goes to the making of a man, he had also, about some things, a woman's sensitiveness.

"It is a long time," she said softly.

"Time is entirely relative," he suggested.



It was an embarrassing situation for her and a painful one for him, this encounter between a man and the girl who had jilted him publicly in the face of all Washington society and eloped with his rival. This meeting in the curved archway passage with a flunky at either end was the first since he had taken leave of her at her house one night three years ago, after an evening at the opera. She had lain in his arms for a moment, her lips had met his willingly, even, as he had often remembered since, with a touch of a rare passion. And on the morrow she had become the Princess von Diss and had sailed for Berlin.

"THIS was bound to happen some day," she said, mastering herself, achieving almost calm. "I hope that you are going to be nice to me."

"I was prepared even to be grateful," he answered, with a little bow. "Alas! Now that I see you I find that impossible."

"Very nice indeed," she approved. "I don't think I have changed much, have I?"

"You look more beautiful than ever," he assured her.

She smiled. His eyes told her that he spoke the truth.

"And you," she went on, "you're just the same—a little more dignified, perhaps. They tell me that you have left the diplomatic service. Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"No work left," he replied. "We move on toward the millennium."

Their eyes met for a moment. There was a silent question in hers which he ignored.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"I've been lunching at the Club," he answered. "I was just going to stroll across to the tennis courts for an hour."

"You can come to the rooms with me, instead," she suggested. "We will find two chairs and talk for a little time. We can't part like this."

He hesitated.

"Am I likely to meet your husband?"

"My husband is not in Monte Carlo at present. I hope you're not going to be horrid about him, Grant—you won't want to fight a duel or anything of that sort?"

"If I had felt that way about it," he answered, "it would have been in an earlier stage of the proceedings. A woman has a right to change her mind. I have harbored no grievance against any one."

He turned with her and they made their way to the bar, almost deserted at that early hour, for it was barely four o'clock, and the rooms were only just opened. They found two comfortable chairs and sat for a few moments in silence. Each was taking stock of the other. He had spoken the truth when he had declared that she was more beautiful than ever. She was very fair, her complexion exquisitely creamy, with scarcely a tinge of color. Her eyes were so deep a blue that they seemed at times almost to attain to that rare and wonderful shade called violet. Her hair was yellow, the color of the faint gold in the morning sky. Her lips were a little fuller than the delicacy of her features required, but beautifully shaped. Her figure he thought improved. She still possessed the grace of long limbs and a slender body, but she had passed from a threatened thinness to a gracious but still delicate maturity. He looked admiringly at her beautiful fingers as she withdrew her gloves.

"You always liked my hands," she murmured, studying them for a moment.

HIS eyes were fixed upon a ring she wore—a thin platinum guard with a single beautifully set pearl. She smiled at him.

"Terribly wrong of me to keep it, I know," she admitted. "But I have. Do you want it back, Grant?"

"No," he answered, a little bruskly, "but——"

"But what?"

"I am not going to flirt with you!" he declared.

She threw her head back and laughed.

"The same familiar Grant, honest to the point of pugnacity. Why, my dear man, how do you ever expect to shine as a diplomatist?"

"I have given up the idea," he reminded her.

"So you are not going to flirt with me?" she sighed.

He avoided the challenge of her eyes, secretly delighted that he found it so easy.

"Since we are here, we must order something," he said, beckoning a waiter. "This fellow has been watching us reproachfully for the last five minutes."

"It's very early, but I'll have some tea," she acquiesced.

Grant gave the order and turned back to his companion. He was forced to make conversation in order to avoid drifting too readily into the intimacies of the past.

"You find life amusing in Berlin?" he asked politely.

"Not at all. Berlin bores me. That is why I'm here. And I can see perfectly well that you are going to do the same, your best to bore me, too. I am disappointed in you."

"That," he complained, "is a little hard. Now that I am a free man, I am full of intelligent interest in Berlin. I hoped that you might gratify my curiosity."

"You were there yourself for two years," she reminded him dryly.

"But that was five years ago. The evidences of what I suppose must be called the royalist movement had only just then begun to appear. Prince Frederick, for instance, was still at school—he had scarcely shown himself in public. Now they tell me that he is almost a popular idol."

Gertrude von Diss gazed thoughtfully into her little golden mirror and used her powder puff with discretion.

"My husband being a member of the Government," she said, "I never discuss politics. I wonder if I shall find a place at one of the baccarat tables. I have lost so much in my small way at roulette that I think I shall give it up for a time. It is not amusing to lose always."

"I'll go and see, if you like," he offered.

"Presently. Tell me about yourself. Why did you give up the diplomatic service?"

"Because there are no diplomatic activities left nowadays for the citizens of the United States," he replied. "The whole world has become a gigantic mart for trade—people to buy, sell, and exchange wares. Consuls can do our business. And then I came into the Van Roorden money and turned lazy, I suppose."

THE room was invaded by a crowd of young people, mostly in flannels, who had evidently come down from the tennis courts. The young woman who seemed to be the ringleader of their gaiety—a very attractive-looking young person indeed, in her white tennis clothes and smart hat—flashed a smile at Grant as she entered the room. The smile was modified as she glanced a little curiously at his companion. When they had settled down for tea at an adjacent table, however, she looked over her shoulder.

"We are having a riotous party to-night," she announced, "dining first at the Villa, coming down here and going on to dance somewhere afterward. Will you come?"

"With the utmost pleasure," he assented promptly. "But shan't I be getting into trouble? What about Bobby?"

She shook her head dolefully and dropped her voice.

"Misbehaved," she confided. "Seen at Nice when he ought to have been playing tennis, yesterday afternoon—terrible! Something Russian, covered with jewels. Bobby can't afford that sort of thing, you know. We're sending him to Coventry for at least two days."

"Poor fellow!" Grant murmured sympathetically.

"DON'T be a hypocrite!" the girl laughed. "You know you're glad. I don't think I shall ever look at him again. And I'm all rebound! Not later than eight-thirty dinner, please. Dad told me that he wanted to see you, but we're not going to leave you at home to study bridge problems."

"I shall be punctual," Grant assured her.

"Can't talk any more," she said, turning away. "These greedy people are eating up all the chocolate éclairs. As it is, every one's had more than his share. You are a pig, Arthur!"

"Who is she?" Gertrude inquired under her breath. "I dislike her, anyhow. I wanted to have you dine with me."

"I don't know whether I ought to apologize," he observed, "for having lost the American habit of introducing. Her name is Susan Yeovil. She's very charming and very popular. Her little set keep things moving down here."

"Is she by any chance the daughter of the English Prime Minister?" Gertrude asked eagerly.

Grant nodded. "Lord Yeovil is down here for the International Congress," he replied. "They have a villa at Cap Martin. . . . Why are you in Monte Carlo alone, just now, Gertrude?" he asked her.

She drew a newspaper cutting from a thin gold card-case and handed it to him. It contained a list of visitors at the various Riviera hotels, his own name among them—underlined. He took the slip of paper from her fingers and looked at it long and earnestly. Then he handed it back without remark.

"That is why I came," she confessed. "It is perhaps just as foolish an impulse as the impulse which swept me off my feet three years and two months ago. But it came and I yielded to it. And now, the first night that I am here, you are dining out. You actually accept an invitation from that forward young woman while you are sitting by my side."

He smiled imperturbably. His impulse of tenderness had passed. He knew now why she had come, and the knowledge gave him an advantage. She had no idea that she had betrayed herself.

PRESENTLY, Grant and his companion rose and moved to the rooms, crowded now with a strange medley of people, men and women of every nationality, and speaking every tongue, differing racially but brought into a curious affinity, the women by the great dressmakers of the world, the men by the unwritten laws of Savile Row. The corner in which they found themselves was an auspicious one and they stood for a moment or two looking on. They themselves were the objects of some attention. Gertrude after her last season, divided between London and Paris, had become a recognized beauty of almost European fame. Her companion—Mr. Grant P. Slattery was the name upon his visiting card—had acquaintances in most of the capitals of the world. In a way he was a good foil to the woman by whose side he stood, a tall, good-looking young American, a little slimmer than the usual type, looking somewhat older than his thirty years, perhaps because of a certain traveled air, a quiet assurance born of his brief but successful diplomatic career in three of the capitals.

The Princess looked into the baccarat room.

"An empty place at my favorite table!" she exclaimed. "Call on me early to-morrow, Grant, and we'll plan something. Forgive my hurrying. I can't afford to miss this."

He watched her pass into the outer room and seat herself contentedly in the vacant place. Then he strolled from table to table, risking a louis now and then, but scarcely waiting to see the result. A spirit of restlessness pursued him. He stood aloof for some minutes, watching Gertrude immersed in the baccarat. Then he wandered into the bar, where Susan Yeovil presently found him. She sank into a chair by his side.

"Broke!" she announced ruefully, turning her little handbag inside out. "Not a louis left, and the others won't be ready to go home for an hour yet."

"Can I be of any assistance?" he ventured.

She shook her head. "I've been too nicely brought up. I couldn't possibly borrow money from you. Tell me about the beautiful lady."

"She was very well known three or four years ago in Washington as Gertrude Butler," Grant confided. "She is the woman to whom I was engaged, and who married Prince Otto von Diss."

She was instantly grave. "You poor thing!" she exclaimed. "How horrid for you, meeting her like that! Did you mind much?"

"I don't know," he replied. "I was asking myself that question as you came up. I have never been able to analyze exactly my feeling for her, either during those days of our engagement or since. I was very much in love with her, if that counts for anything."

"It doesn't," she assured him. "Being in love is just a spring disease. I fancied I was in love with Bobby before I heard of him advertising himself with that Russian lady in Nice. Since, six sets of tennis this afternoon, three éclairs and the cocktail you are going to give me presently have completely cured me."

"Fancy introducing your own experiences in such a serious matter! You are only a child," he reminded her with a smile.

"I'm nineteen," she retorted. "Surely that is old enough for anything. I am of age for the great passion itself, if only it would arrive, and arrive quickly. I believe I heard that croupier call out number fourteen. I know I shall end by risking my good name and borrowing a louis from you."

He laid a handful of notes upon the table beside them. She shook her head again.

"Don't tempt me," she begged. "Besides, I think I would rather talk. I am interested in the Princess. Tell me just how you are feeling about her."

"I couldn't," he confessed.

"Is she here without her husband?"

"Yes."

"Cat! Of course she's come to flirt with you."

"I don't think so. I think she has come here with an altogether different purpose."

"What purpose?"

He smiled at her with affected tolerance.

"After all, you know," he said, "young people shouldn't be too curious."

She drew away from him petulantly.

"I wonder," she complained, "why you always persist in treating me as if I were a child."

"Well, aren't you?" he rejoined. "Nineteen isn't very old, you know."

"Anyway, if father can tell me things," she argued, "I don't see why you should object."

"What does your father tell you?"

"NOTHING that I am going to repeat to you, Mr. Inquisitor. I will tell you this, though," she went on, dropping her voice a little. "He isn't at all happy about the way things are going over at Nice. Did you know that it was he who insisted upon sittings being suspended for a day, and that he and Arthur sent no less than twenty cables away last night?"

"Yes, I knew," he admitted. "But I had no idea that you did."

She permitted herself a friendly little grimace.

"I only mentioned it just to show that every one doesn't ignore me as you do," she observed. "Here's Arthur. He's having a day off, isn't he?"

The young man came up and displayed a handful of plaques. He was good-looking in a pale, rather tired way.

"Why do I slave for your father, Lady Susan," he demanded, "for a vulgar pittance, when there are thousands of these to be picked up here without the slightest effort?"

"Vulgar pittance!" she scoffed. "I'm sure dad, or rather the country, pays you quite as much as you're worth. Besides, look at the number of free meals you get!"

"This to the private secretary of a Prime Minister!" the young man groaned. "Why, my dear child——"

"I'm nobody's dear child," she interrupted. "I am 'Lady Susan' to you two men, except perhaps after a dance, or in the moonlight, or on the river, when I feel yielding and let either of you call me 'Susan.' Please get this into your heads, that I am nobody's 'child.' In this age of flappers, nineteen is almost passé. I could be married to-morrow, if I chose."

"Heaven forbid!" Arthur exclaimed. "At any rate, unless it were to me."

"You'd have to change considerably, before I'd marry either of you," she declared. "If you've won all those plaques, you can lend me one. You can get it out of father to-night!"

"And you refused to borrow from me!" Grant said, reproachfully.

"Well, you see Arthur is one of the household," she explained, "and I don't feel the same way about him. Besides, I shall probably repay him in ten minutes. I feel that my luck is in."

She strolled off. The Honorable Arthur Lymane sank into her vacant place.

"You're coming up to-night, Slattery?"

"I'm dining."

"The chief wants to see you particularly," Lymane confided, dropping his voice. "He's already cabled to Washington. There's a damned funny atmosphere about the proceedings at Nice this time. Nothing that amounts to anything, probably, but every one seems to be so jolly mysterious."

"Is that so?" Grant murmured.

"The chief took the bull by the horns yesterday when he suspended sittings for twenty-four hours. It gives us a breathing spell, anyway."

"Have you any idea what's at the bottom of it all?" Grant asked.

His companion shook his head.

"The chief will talk to you to-night. He may be more communicative with you than he has been with me. By Jove! Grant, old fellow!" he exclaimed, his tone suddenly changing to one of wondering admiration. "There's the most beautiful woman I've ever seen in my life. Coming straight at us, too."

The young man had already risen to his feet as though about to take his departure, but, as Gertrude crossed the room toward them, he remained transfixed, watching her. His look was no ordinary stare. The admiration it expressed was, in its way, too subtle and too involuntary.

"She's coming straight at us," he repeated, in an agitated whisper. "For heaven's sake, if you know her, Slattery, present me."

Gertrude, smiling, came toward them. She seemed already to appreciate the situation. Grant rose to his feet.

"Congratulate me!" she exclaimed. "I've won thirty thousand francs."

"Come and celebrate with us," Grant invited, drawing up a chair for her. "Let me present my friend, Mr. Arthur Lymane —Princess von Diss."

THE uproarious little dinner party at the Villa Miranda drew to a close. Lord Yeovil rose to his feet and laid his hand on Grant's shoulder.

"My young friend," he said, "let us leave this scene of debauchery for a few minutes. You and I will take our coffee together in my den. Thank Heaven, none of my colleagues or any members of our new Yellow Press were present here to-night. You were the only silent person, Arthur," he added, pausing on his way to the door. "You look as though you had seen a vision."

The young man, whose silence had indeed been noticeable, looked up.

"I have," he admitted.

"Arthur has fallen in love with a beautiful stranger," Susan called out. "Something must be done about it. Now that we've sent Bobby to Coventry we really can't spare Arthur. Dad, isn't it one of the duties of a Prime Minister's private secretary to flirt with his daughter when she feels so disposed?"

"Certainly," Lord Yeovil agreed.

"It is also," Grant reminded her, with a slight smile, "part of the duties of a Prime Minister's daughter to see that the secretary doesn't fall under the influence of fascinating but mysterious strangers."

"That settles your hash, young man," Susan declared, across the table. "You stick to me to-night."

"I think I'll resign," Arthur announced. "These conferences are a great strain on my nervous system as it is."

"Wouldn't you be scared if dad took you at your word!" Susan observed, reaching over the table for the cigarettes. "You'd never get another job."

"You're all very rude to me," Arthur complained, with a show of dignity. "I am considered in political circles to be a young man of much promise. The *Daily Sun* said so last week."

There was a chorus of derision, in the midst of which Grant and his host made their way to a small sitting-room at the back of the house. Coffee and liqueurs were upon the sideboard, and upon the table a copy of the *Field*, and two packs of cards.

"Now, my young friend," Lord Yeovil invited, "help yourself to anything you fancy, and there upon the table you will find a highly interesting bridge problem by way of bluff. Only, whatever we may have to say to one another, let us get it over quickly. The great thing is not to keep Susan waiting. She doesn't understand the interference of international history with her amusements! First of all, have you anything fresh to report?"

"Nothing very definite, sir," Grant acknowledged, "but in a sense, my cruise to Archangel was a success."

"You mean that you were right in your suspicions?"

"I obtained a good deal of evidence in support of it, evidence which is now in the hands of the British Admiralty. I was at Archangel for a fortnight, and I had letters of introduction to two of the Russian admirals. I spent a lot of time on their ships. They were almost as hospitable as the sailors of the old régime."

"Tried to drink you under the table, and that sort of thing, I suppose?"

Grant smiled.

"I SURVIVED the ordeal, but I am afraid that my liver is temporarily deranged," he admitted. "I obtained a lot of quite useful information. Personally I am absolutely convinced now that the Russian fleet has never been trained or adjusted to form a separate unit. It is intended to act in conjunction with the German fleet in some unknown enterprise. A number of the engineers and gunners are Germans, and there is a distinct atmosphere of German discipline about the whole outfit.

"In addition, as I dare say you've heard, they're all armed with German guns. Of course even a non-expert can easily understand that two nations like Germany and Russia might easily keep within the tonnage allowed them by the Washington Conference, and yet, if each concentrated upon a particular sort of armament, they would, when brought together, be a more formidable fighting unit than the united forces of any two countries who had each spread out their tonnage to make an individual unit."

"YOU think that is the basis of this understanding between Germany and Russia?" Lord Yeovil asked.

"I am convinced of it," Grant replied. "Internal evidence was more difficult to get than external, but I have obtained a certain amount of proof that, contrary to the provisions of the Pact, there exists a secret naval understanding between Germany and Russia. Fortunately for us and for every one, it is Great Britain's turn this year to police the seas, so I have made an exhaustive report to your Admiralty. I'm pretty certain that there'll be British warships in the Baltic before many weeks are past."

"You didn't come back in the yacht?"

Grant shook his head.

"I came back overland, sir. I spent four days in Berlin—my second visit as a traveler from the Bethlehem Steel Company."

"Pick up anything?"

"Not much. They're pretty close-lipped in Berlin just now, and I had to be careful. I came away, however, with the absolute conviction that there is something in the air. There is what we used to call a 'cyclonic disturbance' about, and the trail led here. You probably know more about it than I do."

"That 'cyclonic disturbance' is brewing, all right," the other assented. "We're in the thick of it at Nice. The day before yesterday, we came almost to a deadlock over a question Lutrecht persisted in raising and which we discussed for hours. I am going to treat you with a great deal of confidence, as I always have done, Grant. Years ago, when you were First Secretary at your Embassy in London, and I was Foreign Minister, I discovered that you shared one conviction which has been at the root of the whole of my policy from the moment I entered the Cabinet. That conviction is that the interests of Great Britain and the United States of America are inextricably and inevitably identical. There it is in plain words, the text of my political life; and because I know that you share it, I have treated you with a confidence I have not extended even to one of my own countrymen.

"I am now going beyond the limits of official propriety. I am going to tell you what the trouble has been at the last two meetings of the Congress. It has been this: Lutrecht, apparently out of a clear sky, has enunciated this principle and claims the confirmation of the Pact: that, whereas all the nations of the Pact stand together against aggression by any member of it against another member, there is nothing in its constitution to prevent two members of the Pact arriving at separate and individual understanding as regards proceedings directed against any nation not a member of the Pact. Do you follow me, Grant?"

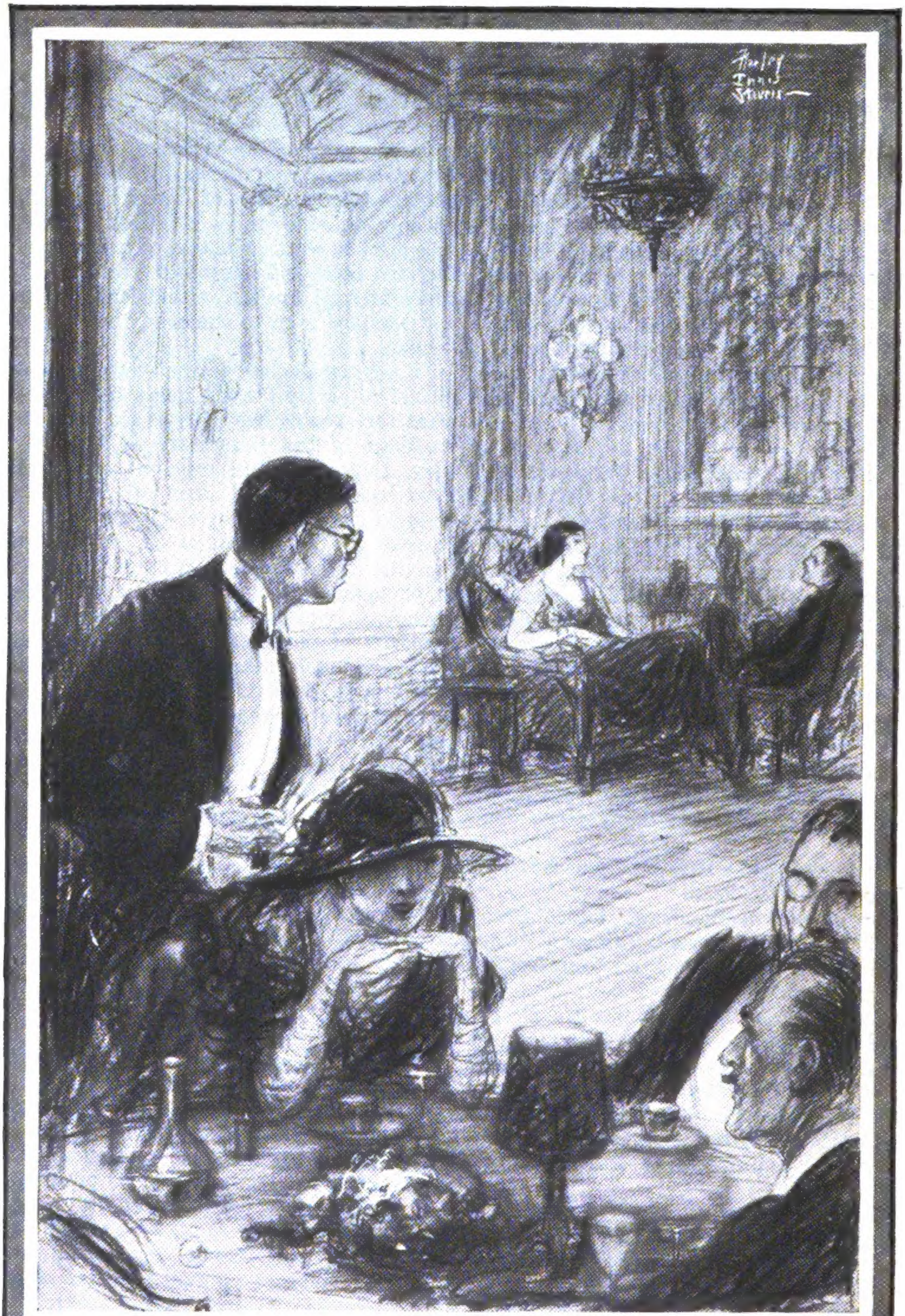
"To the bitter end," was Grant's reply. "The thing's as plain as a pikestaff. I have felt this coming for years. We are close on the trouble now."

"Well," Lord Yeovil continued, "I suspended proceedings for twenty-four hours in order to obtain the opinion of some international jurists. I shall delay them for another twenty-four hours—until to-morrow's meeting."

GRANT leaned a little forward in his chair. It was obvious that he was deeply moved.

"I can't tell you, sir, how much I appreciate your confidence," he said, "and honestly, I think the fact that you have been willing to give it to me has been and will be helpful to the peace of the world. And now I am going to ask you something else. You are postponing the consideration of Prince Lutrecht's arguments until after to-morrow, as you admit, with a purpose. Is that purpose your intention to propose to the Conference that the United States be once more invited to join the Pact?"

The Prime Minister eyed his vis-à-vis for a moment with inscrutable countenance.


Harley Ennis Stivers

"As I learn the details," Cleo promised, "you shall be told. It is my will to wreck his schemes."
Across the room, the young man's vengeful eyes seemed to be glaring at them.

He was no longer the indulgent father of a tomboy daughter nor the genial host of a young people's party. He looked every inch of him the great statesman he really was.

"Where did you get that from, Grant?" he demanded.

"You know my position, sir," the young man replied earnestly. "I am the one foreign Secret Service agent my country can claim. Even then, I'm not official. I have money to spend and I spend it. I have sources of information, too, and I use them. I have friends in Washington, too, with whom I am in touch hour by hour. This is not a question of betrayal, it is more divination. They expect that invitation, on the other side, sir. The best of them hope for it. Will it be forthcoming?"

LORD YEOVIL considered for a full minute. Then he knocked the ash from his cigar.

"Well," he admitted, "you've seen your way to the truth, Grant. I'm going to risk it. It's a big thing so far as I am concerned. If by any chance the Conference opposes me, my resignation will be inevitable. If by any chance I get the thing through and Washington refuses, I shall be the most discredited politician who ever placed his country in a humiliating position."

"I don't think the United States will refuse," Grant declared. "It is most unfortunate that the matter will have to go to the Senate and be publicly discussed because of course, as you know, there are always malignant influences in a polyglot country like ours. But I know the feeling of the people who count. They want to come in like hell."

"I expect you've been supplying them with a little information," Lord Yeovil observed.

Grant nodded. "I never leave them alone," he admitted. "To a certain extent, I'm afraid they look upon me as an alarmist for the simple reason that there is scarcely a single citizen of the United States who doesn't believe absolutely in the impregnability of his country. However, I think I've stirred them up a little in Washington, and there's more to be done in that way, yet. Do you feel inclined to tell me, sir, what would be the prospect of the voting if you bring forward your motion to-morrow?"

"THEY appear to me to be in favor," was the deliberate reply. "When the Pact was first formed any invitation to join it had to be unanimous. Lately, however, that has been modified. Unless there are four dissentients now, any nation proposed becomes, if willing to join, *ipso facto* a member of the Pact. I can conceive two; it might be possible to conceive three dissentients. I can put my finger upon no possible fourth."

"I see," Grant murmured. "By the way, was Baron Nago at Nice yesterday?"

"He was."

"Do you know if he has received any dispatches from home since the last sitting?"

Lord Yeovil considered for a moment.

"He must have," he acknowledged, "because he was able to give us a very crude description of these flying boats of theirs, which the Italians are so curious about. He had no information at all two days ago when the matter came up."

"I'd give in the neighborhood of a million dollars to see that dispatch," Grant declared.

There was still a great deal of noise in the dining-room and in the passage. Lord Yeovil walked to the door and locked it. Then he came back to his place. He spoke slowly, with the air of one choosing his words.

"Slattery," he said, "it has been in my mind for two years to propose a further invitation to your country, to join the Pact, because in my opinion conditions during the last decade have entirely altered, and the position of your country outside the Pact, even though she may be considered the greatest power in the world, has become anomalous and dangerous. She has subscribed to the Limitation of Armaments, which she herself inaugurated, and has scrupulously carried out her obligations. With all her power and wealth she is unable to launch a single battleship or put under arms a single regiment of soldiers beyond the proportion allotted to her by the other subscribing powers. Yet, although she is in this position, she is not a member of the Pact. That is to say that, legally speaking, any two or three nations who do belong to the Pact might attack America with superior forces and the other members of the Pact would be powerless."

"You have placed the matter in a nutshell, sir," Grant agreed. "It was the consideration of these things which brought me to Europe and keeps me employed here. America, when the great call came, rose magnificently to her opportunities. She stretched across to Europe and though, indeed, others bore the brunt of the burden, she ended the war of 1914. Since then, without a doubt, she has had a political relapse. Her statesmen have lost a certain measure of insight and vision. She has sunk back into the parochial. Politics have become more than ever a game and a profession. Her statesmen are so busy fighting over their own national problems that they have never envisaged the danger upon the horizon. That has been my view. It is my view to-day."

"Go on," Lord Yeovil invited. "You have not been in Europe during these last twelve months for nothing."

"I AM convinced," Grant declared, "that Germany and Japan have arrived at an understanding to strike at America. I am convinced for that reason that they will oppose your invitation to America to-morrow. If they do not and I have wasted my time, then God be thanked for it. I shall go back to polo and golf, hunt the hounds at Pau, and never take myself seriously again."

The older man helped himself to a cigarette and tapped it thoughtfully upon the table without lighting it.

"There is just one thing, Slattery," he said; "I have the greatest respect and liking for Nago. I cannot somehow believe that he would oppose me to-morrow unless he first gave me some intimation of his intention. Besides, he isn't in the least bellicose. I believe him to be an honorable man, and I can't imagine his being mixed up in any Teutonic plot."

Grant nodded. "I, too," he agreed, "have a great respect for Nago. At the same time, with these Orientals, one has to remember it is their country first, their country second, and their country all the time."

There were warning sounds from outside—the exodus of all the young people into the hall. Insistent voices called for Grant. He slipped across and unlocked the door.

"You had better go," his host advised. "We understand one another and there is nothing more to be done at present. To-morrow, after the meeting of the Conference, we shall know where we stand."

"It is a private meeting, isn't it?"

"Yes. Thank God, we've managed to keep the Press out. Between you and me, Grant, if there were no newspapers, all the nations of the world would be sitting round in a family party. There would be no wars and very few quarrels. It is the enlightened press of this generation which provides the fuel for tragedy."

The door was thrown open.

" 'X to lead the ace of hearts, and make the grand slam!' " Lady Susan cried. "Do come along, Grant. Whatever do grand slams in print matter? I have liqueurs on with Arthur that we're in the Club in twelve minutes. Do you think your Rolls-Royce is equal to it?"

"Nine and a half is my time," Grant replied. "Nine if you run up the stairs. Come on!"

The little party hurried off, their automobile lights flashing through the darkness of the curving drive, their voices disturbing the owls and waking echoes in the silence. Then the last car glided off down the hill and the Villa was left in silence.

Toward it, from the other side of Nice, came thundering through the darkness a great limousine, with its four lights flaring and siren whistle blowing. Outside, the driver sat with a face like a graven image, with one thought in his brain. Inside, a man lay back among the cushions, upon whose forehead the sign of death already seemed to rest.

LORD YEOVIL, after the departure of the young people of the house, settled down to spend an evening after his own heart. He rang for his servant, ordered the wood fire to be replenished, exchanged his dinner coat for a smoking jacket, and lit a battered brier pipe. He was beginning to feel the need for a period of cool and impartial deliberation. For the last ten days he had been presiding over the meetings at Nice of the Pact of Nations, an organization established in Paris in 1930, and now, twenty years later, the guiding force of the world. Its bitterest critics—and at first it had had many—were forced now to admit that the Pact had become one of the brilliant successes of the century. Its conception had first been mooted at a trades conference at Genoa in 1922, and its provisions, subsequently drawn up with the utmost care by a committee of European law-makers, practically made war among its members impossible.

France had been able to abandon herself at last to a sense of complete and luxurious security. Germany, admitted after some hesitation, had apparently been among its most law-abiding members. The Limitation of Armaments, the great pacific scheme initiated by the President of the United States in 1921, was still carried on as a separate institution but with numerous affiliations. There was only one great drawback to the Pact, one flaw alone which prevented its being the greatest association ever formed during the world's history, and that drawback was the fact which, at the present moment, was giving both Grant Slattery and Lord Yeovil cause for the greatest apprehension. The United States, after a period of profound deliberation, during which great dissensions had arisen, had decided to remain the one great power outside its influence.

For the same reasons which had kept her for so long out of the war of 1914, she had reiterated her policy of self-determination and had once more declared Europe outside the sphere of her political interests. Her position was in its way magnificent and evoked the florid and rhetorical praise of many of her own writers, especially those who were in any way Teutonic in their origin. Those who, like Grant Slattery, saw the sinister side of the situation were few and their voices unheard in the great glad paean of thanksgiving in which her press, day by day, and month by month, glorified and exaggerated her unexampled and amazing prosperity. Without a doubt America had become the richest country in the world.

It was of America that Lord Yeovil, who had once been a highly popular Ambassador at Washington, was thinking as he smoked his disreputable pipe, lounging in an easy-chair, his feet upon the fender. He had a profound respect for Grant Slattery, whose handling of various intricate matters, while First Secretary in London, had won his unqualified approval. The young man had seemed at that time assured of an ambassadorship and his withdrawal from the Diplomatic Service had been a mystery. Lord Yeovil knew the reason for that withdrawal and was day by day growing more thoroughly to appreciate it. He was thinking of it now as he smoked his meditative pipe, wondering exactly how much real information Grant had picked up in Berlin, wondering, too, whether that small cloud which had already appeared on the political horizon was destined seriously to disturb the world's peace after thirty years.

THE sound of wheels in the drive and the pealing of the bell broke into his reflections. He glanced at the clock. It was a few minutes past eleven—an impossible hour for an ordinary caller. Presently Andrews, a young typist employed by his private secretary, knocked at the door and entered.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, sir," he said, "but Baron Nago is here and asks if you will receive him."

"Baron Nago!" the Prime Minister repeated in amazement. "At this time of the night?"

"He seems to have come straight from Nice," the young man confided.

"I will see him, unofficially, of course—delighted. But what on earth is the urgency?"

"His Excellency gave me no intimation, sir."

"You can show him in," Lord Yeovil directed. "Explain that I'm out of harness and spending a quiet evening."

Baron Nago himself was obviously paying no visit of ceremony. He had not changed his clothes for the evening and was wearing the frock coat and dark trousers in which he usually appeared at meetings of the Conference. His complexion was always rather more waxen than sallow, but to-night it was positively ghastly. His little formal bow before he advanced to shake hands was unsteady. Another man might have been suspected of being slightly drunk.

"My dear Baron!" Lord Yeovil said, hospitably. "This is very friendly of you. I hope you do not bring me bad news. Sit down, please," he invited.

The Ambassador sank into an easy-chair. He was most undoubtedly ill.

"I am much obliged to you, sir, for receiving me at this late hour," he said. "My errand is of some importance. I have come to announce to you, in the first place, that my Imperial Master has accepted my resignation from the highly honorable post of Ambassador to Great Britain and also from the representation of Japan at the Pact of Nations. I shall, not, therefore, be attending the meeting to-morrow."

"God bless my soul!" Lord Yeovil exclaimed. "I regret very much to hear this."

"YOUR Lordship is very kind," was the agitated reply. "Baron Katina is on his way from Berlin to take my place at the Pact of Nations and Count Itash is already on the spot if anything of urgency should occur. My Imperial Master has not, I believe, as yet signified his wishes so far as regards my successor at the Court of St. James's."

"But my dear Baron, this is most terrible news!" the other declared. "Most unexpected, too. If you will allow me to say so, there is no man with whom it has been a greater pleasure to work or whose loyal support during the past sessions I have more appreciated."

"You are very kind, Lord Yeovil, most gracious," his visitor repeated a trifle wistfully. "It has come to pass, however, that on a very vital matter I have found myself unable to conform to the policy of those in whose hands the destiny of my country rests. It is a great grief to me."

"I am sure it must be," the Prime Minister assented, watching his visitor closely. "You have made me very curious. I was not aware that there was any subject at present under consideration which could give scope for a difference of opinion of such drastic moment."

"The greatest tragedy of this matter is now to come," Baron Nago continued solemnly. "For my country's sake, I am here to betray her confidence. I shall place you, sir, in possession of certain information which, as President of the Pact of Nations, should be disclosed to you. After I have spoken, you will hear of me no more. It is for the ultimate good of Japan and my people—but for the moment the words I must speak are treason and for speaking them I must pay the price."

Lord Yeovil was seriously disturbed. There was something in his visitor's attitude and demeanor which was beyond his comprehension.

"But, my dear Baron," he began.

The Ambassador moved uneasily in his chair. There were blue lines under his eyes. It was more than ever obvious that he was very ill.

"A thousand pardons," he interrupted, weakly, "but I have perhaps underestimated the action—I am weaker than some of my years. Listen, I implore you."

Lord Yeovil hastened to the little sideboard and poured out a glass of brandy.

"Don't distress yourself, Baron," he begged. "You can tell me anything you wish to, presently; I am always at your service. Drink this, please."

Baron Nago clutched at the glass, clutched at his throat. He made a passionate attempt to speak. The words, however, were almost incomprehensible.

"Katina, and—Lutrecht—America—the beginning—the great scheme—Itash knows—God of my parents!"

The glass rolled from his fingers. His head dropped forward. Lord Yeovil rushed to the bell.

"Telephone for a doctor," he cried to the butler, who answered. "Baron Nago is ill."

But Baron Nago was no longer ill. Both master and servant knew the truth as they stood and looked at the crumpled figure on the chair.

THERE is an inner annex to the bar at the Sporting Club, at either end of which a discreet flirtation is entirely in order. Grant, wandering in for a whisky and soda, toward midnight, was arrested by the sight of Gertrude and Arthur, their heads very close together, the young man's air of devotion unmistakable. He watched them with a deepening frown. Suddenly he felt a touch upon his arm. Susan stood by his side. Her voice was as gay as usual, but she was pale, and a little tired.

"Disgraceful, isn't it?" she exclaimed. "We're absolutely deserted. I'm afraid Arthur's lost his head altogether."

"He's a fool," Grant declared.

She looked at him a little wistfully.

"Do you mind so much?"

"I mind because——"

He broke off in his sentence. After all, his peculiar knowledge of Gertrude was better kept to himself for the present.

"Well, I don't like to see him make a fool of himself," he said, a little awkwardly. "The Princess is a married woman and has a jealous husband. She is also a hardened flirt."

"We thought of going directly," she said. "What ought we to do about Arthur?"

"I'll go and tell him as soon as you're ready," Grant offered.

"We're all here now. Rose and Tommy are outside, and Bobby's gone for his coat. We've had to forgive him. He's so terribly penitent. We're four without Arthur, if you like. I suppose you could look after me, with an effort," she added, looking up at him.

"Of course I could. But we ought to let him know we're going," Grant decided. "I'll step across and tell him."

SUSAN turned toward the cloak room, and Grant crossed toward the others. Gertrude welcomed him with a smile, half challenging, half provocative. Her companion was inclined to be querulous.

"Lady Susan wants to know whether you're coming along with us, Lymane," Grant said. "We're all quite ready."

The young man glanced at the clock.

"Much too early," he grumbled. "There'll be no one there before one o'clock."

"The others seem to want to go."

"Well, there are four of you," Lymane pointed out. "I'll come along presently."

"I think you'd better come with us," Grant persisted. "That is, if the Princess will spare you."

"But I will not spare him," she laughed. "I like him very much. He says much nicer things to me than you do, and I do not see why you should hurry him away."

"Neither do I," Lymane agreed. "Make my excuses, there's a good chap. I'll come along within half an hour or so. Lady Susan is in your charge, anyway, not mine. I'm the odd man out."

Grant turned away with the slightest of bows. He found the little party waiting for him downstairs, reënforced by the advent of another young man, a friend of the Lancasters.

"Arthur is hopelessly enslaved," Grant announced. "The beautiful Princess has him in her clutches. He says he'll come along presently. I should doubt whether we see him again this evening."

"It doesn't really matter whether we do or not," Susan remarked, as she stepped into the car by Grant's side. "That nice Wheeler boy, who plays tennis so well, is coming along, so we shall get all the dancing we want. Are you going to dance with me, Grant? And why do you look so cross?"

"I'm not really cross," he assured her; "but Arthur, when he likes, can be such a hopeless young ass. Anyway, I'll get the first dance with you."

They glided across the square, past the gardens and into the quiet street on the right-hand side. They entered the restaurant to the strains of modified jazz music, ordered champagne and sandwiches and sat down at a round table.

"You do dance well, you know, Grant," Susan told him, after their second turn.

"You're rather wonderful yourself, after eight sets of tennis," he observed. "Is it my fancy, or are you a little pale?"

"I did feel tired a little time ago," she admitted. "It's passing off now, though. What a shame one of you has to sit out!"

"Bobby isn't going to sit out long," he pointed out. "Young rascal!"

They watched the young man lead away one of the professional dancers. Susan laughed.

"Just like Bobby," she declared. "He can't dance for nuts. If he wanted to dance with a professional, though, I wonder why on earth he didn't choose the little one at the next table to us."

GRANT glanced at the girl, at first carelessly, but afterward with genuine interest. She was at a small round table close to their own—dark, pale, almost sallow, with silky eyebrows and eyelashes, and black hair in which, as she moved her head to the music, there seemed to be a gleam of wine color. She was plainly dressed in a black taffeta gown and wore no jewels. There was something about her expression peculiarly inscrutable, and yet Grant fancied that, as his eyes met hers, she intended in some mysterious way to let him know that she had observed his interest.

"What a quaint creature!" he observed. "I wonder who she is?"

"She's one of the professional dancers," Susan told him. "She was here on Monday, and when we were here the week before. She was dancing all the time with that Japanese Count then, the young man who does the interpreting at Nice. Look at Bobby being taught new steps; isn't he priceless?"

The evening wore on in the usual way. The little party danced incessantly, drank a moderate quantity of champagne and a great many orangeades, and watched the throng of people with a certain amount of interest. Suddenly Susan touched Grant on the arm.

"A tragedy," she whispered. "Look at the dark young woman's face. Her Japanese Count has just come in with another woman."

Grant turned around and was just in time to catch an expression on the girl's face which, for a moment, almost shocked him. The slightly scornful air of inscrutability was gone, the lips had parted, there was a gleam of white teeth, her eyes had narrowed almost into slits, and her eyebrows had drawn closer together. It was all over in a moment, so quickly indeed that Grant wondered whether it had really been murder that he had seen there. She even glanced across the room and nodded carelessly to the young man and the girl, a dancer from another cabaret. Grant exchanged questioning glances with Susan.

"Do you know," he said, "it seemed to me, for a moment, that she was going to play the virago."

"She looked like a little fiend," Susan replied. "Bother! Here comes Arthur. I suppose I shall have to dance this with him."

Lymane came in, full of apologies. He was a little absorbed in manner and he took the chaff to which he was subjected in a somewhat spiritless fashion.

"Don't see what any one's got against me," he remarked, as he helped himself to a glass of wine. "You're a man over, already. What about this dance, Lady Susan?"

"The next," she answered, waving him away. "After that, you, please, Grant."

Grant and Arthur Lymane were left alone. At the adjoining table the dark girl was smoking a cigarette and drinking tea, glancing occasionally toward them.

"Lymane," said his companion, "may I take a liberty with you?"

"Go ahead."

"I don't think you're altogether wise to cultivate your acquaintance with the Princess von Diss."

"Why the devil not?" the young man demanded.

"If you're going to take it like that, there's no more to be said about it. I'm sorry I spoke."

"You'd better tell me what you mean, anyway."

"MINE is simply the obvious point of view," Grant explained. "You are the private secretary of the Prime Minister of your country, who is also President of the Pact of Nations. I do not think that I would become too intimate or be too much seen in public with the wife of a German statesman of von Diss's known proclivities."

Lymane lit a cigarette with trembling fingers.

"You're out of your mind, Slattery," he declared.

"Perhaps," was the quiet rejoinder. "The advice I offered you is for your own good."

"The usual cant," the young man sneered. "You're talking ancient history. What's the difference between Germany and the other nations? What's the Pact done, I should like to know, if it hasn't brought them all into a group? You seem to be harking back to the primeval days when German spies and adventurous princesses were the stock in trade of the sensational novelist."

"Such people may still exist," Grant persisted.

"Rubbish! What is there to spy about? They're all making a fuss over at Nice, but I've come to the conclusion that it doesn't amount to anything. You're a bit of an alarmist, I know, Slattery, but I'm not. In any case, to take exception to my friendship with the Princess simply because you yourself have had a misunderstanding with her is neither more nor less than ridiculous."

Grant looked at his companion curiously.

"I am sorry you take it so," he said. "I will admit that I hold a somewhat gloomy view of the international situation just now, but you are wrong when you suggest that I have any sort of misunderstanding with the Princess."

"At any rate, von Diss is not a particular friend of yours, is he?" the young man asked meaningly.

Grant rose to his feet.

"Look here, Lymane," he protested. "There are limits to the disagreeable things you may say to me. I think——"

It was one of those happenings which Grant could never explain even to himself.

He rose to his feet simply with the intention of leaving his companion for a moment or two. As he did so, unseen to him, the girl at the next table rose also. She held out her arms quite naturally, without saying a word, without even looking directly toward him. No word of invitation passed from either one to the other. When, afterward, Grant asked himself how that dance had come about, he could only surmise that the girl had willed it.

"I SUPPOSE," Grant remarked after their first turn of the room, "that I must be psychic."

"Why?" asked the girl.

"Because although you have never addressed a word to me, not even since we commenced to dance, I believe that you have something to say."

"It is not you who are psychic," she replied. "It was I who conveyed that impression to you. We will stop now. Come this way, please."

She led the way to two chairs set in a retired corner of the bar, which was just then almost deserted.

"That was a very short dance," he complained.

"You dance very well," she assured; "but to talk is sometimes more important."

He looked at her with quickening curiosity. In her strange, quiet way. she was, without a doubt, attractive. Not only was she without ornaments, but her dress itself was made in the plainest possible fashion. There was no color upon her cheeks, or carmine upon her lips. She seemed even to have disdained the powder puff.

"What will you have?" he asked, as a waiter drew near. "Some champagne?"

"Thank you," she replied. "I never drink wine. I will have some tea and some cigarettes."

"Aren't you a little unusual for a place like this?" he asked.

"Very," she admitted. "At first they did not wish to take me. Now they know better. I can bring them custom when I choose."

"You speak very good English," he said, "but you are not English, are you?"

"My mother," she told him, "was Japanese. My father was a Levantine. I was born in Alexandria. There are only two things I can do in the world—dance and speak many languages. But no, there is a third. I can hate."

"Well, I hope you won't hate me," he remarked smilingly.

She studied him for a moment and it seemed to him that it was the first time that their eyes had met.

"No," she assured him, "I shall never hate you; nor shall I love you. Perhaps that is as well, or the young lady at your table would be jealous."

"There is no one at my table who is particularly interested in me," he declared.

"That is not true," she replied. "Lady Susan Yeovil is very much interested in you."

He was half amused, half inclined to be irritated at what seemed to be presumption.

"The young lady and I are very good friends," he observed.

"That may be your feeling, but it is not hers," she said composedly. "You look as though you thought that it was none of my business. It is not. I will speak to you of another matter."

"As soon as you please. I must be getting back to my friends before long."

She stirred her tea lazily.

"I shall not keep you from them," she promised. "Do you know the man who came in with Yvonne Cortot from the Café de Paris?"

"I HAVE never seen him before," Grant replied.

"His name is Itash," she continued. "Count Itash. Some of the girls call him 'Sammy'—I do not know why. You are an American, are you not?"

"I am," he replied.

"You are a patriot?"

"I think I may call myself one," he assented, a little bewildered.

"Then you should beware of Count Itash," the girl said slowly, "—Count Itash whom Yvonne christened Sammy. Count

Itash does not love your country. He would hurt you if he could."

Grant felt that she was watching him out of the corners of her eyes. He laughed with pretended scorn.

"My dear young lady," he protested, "all that sort of thing died a natural death many years ago. I don't suppose there is any great friendliness between our nations, but we get on all right nowadays."

"Do you? I am not so sure. Count Itash does not think so, either. I have heard him speak of disputes in Washington."

"Count Itash must be a very indiscreet young man," Grant observed. "There may have been a little trouble lately, but all these things are settled now in a friendly way."

"There is something coming soon," she warned him, "which will not be settled in a friendly way. There is a demand soon to be made in Washington which may end in a threat."

"A threat of what? The days of wars are over."

She turned her head slightly.

"Only for those," she reminded him, "who belong to the Pact of Nations."

"What on earth do you know about the Pact of Nations?" he asked curiously.

"I know everything there is to be known. I have a capable instructor."

"I am more than ever convinced," he said dryly, "that Count Itash is a very indiscreet young man."

She knocked the ash from her cigarette onto a plate.

"Count Itash has never addressed a word to me on the subject in his life," she assured him.

"Who is your informant then?"

"Count Itash."

"You indulge in conundrums," he remarked.

"WHY waste time on the trivial?" she said, scornfully. "I can tell you great truths. What does it matter how I come by them? You would scarcely believe me if you knew, and it really does not matter. The truth is all that matters."

"Who is it that you imagine to be plotting against my country?" he asked.

"Japan and Germany. Possibly China also. You know what Germany lives for? Revenge. As the years go by, she schemes, her schemes mature. She is nearer the end now than at any time. Shall I tell you of two things which will happen before many years have passed?"

"I fancy that you're a prophet of woe. But let's hear, anyway."

"Prince Frederick will have been proclaimed Emperor of Germany and Germany and Russia will have declared war against the world."

"HAS your informant also vouchsafed the information as to where the money is to come from?"

"From the conquest of America."

"God bless my soul!" Grant gasped.

The orchestra was playing a waltz now. The music seemed to reach them in little ripples of melody. The sound of voices grew louder and even the popping of corks more insistent. A young man came round toward the bar and paused to glance meditatively at the two occupants of the almost empty room. Afterwards, he ignored them, and seated himself on one of the stools in front of the bar.

"Itash is uneasy," she whispered. "He does not wish very much that I talk to you. He has no idea that I know what I know, but you see how restless he is. Something tells him that there is danger about. Sammy!"

The young man swung round on his stool and came toward them at once.

"Let me introduce you to my new friend, Mr. Grant Slattery," she said coolly. "Count Itash."

"I am very glad to meet you, sir," Itash declared, speaking English with a somewhat guttural accent for one of his race.

"And how is it that you have left Yvonne?" the girl inquired. "You had better hurry back, or she may make you jealous. There are many here who like to dance with her."

"Yvonne! That is nothing!" the man answered. "An affair of the moment. Will you dance with me, Cleo? That is, if you, sir, will permit," he added, turning to Grant.

"By all means," the latter assented; "but mademoiselle will return?"

"I shall most certainly return," the girl promised. "There is a great deal more that I have to say to you, Mr. Slattery. I like very much to talk to you. You understand so well the things that interest me."

"The prodigal returned!" Rose Lancaster exclaimed, as Grant rejoined the little party. "I think that we ought to send him to Coventry just as we did Bobby."

"Nonsense!" Susan expostulated. "Every one dances with these professionals. The only point is whether Grant was quite justified in taking her to such a very secluded corner. Votes on the subject, please."

"She is a most attractive-looking young woman," Lymane declared. "Something about her quite different. I thought at first she was a little shop-girl out for a holiday."

"I didn't," Susan remarked dryly. "I've seen her dance. Her name is Mademoiselle Cleo, and she used to be at the Palais Royal. What did you talk to her about, Grant?"

"To tell you the truth," he replied, "we were in the midst of an interesting conversation when her young Japanese admirer came and dragged her away. We're going to finish later."

"You're engaged to dance with me, anyhow," Susan reminded him, rising to her feet.

They moved off, danced, and waited for the encore.

"I wish you hadn't been so attentive to the young woman," Susan said abruptly.

"Why?"

She waited for a moment until they were out of the crowd.

"There's some trouble between them already," she whispered. "Was he jealous of you, do you suppose?"

GRANT looked across the room. Itash and the girl were seated at a table together, Itash leaning toward his companion, his face dark and even threatening. The girl smiled back at him with a look of obvious disdain. Close at hand, Yvonne, the little danseuse from the Café de Paris whom Itash had brought with him, watched them both with growing anger.

"I'm afraid there's going to be trouble there," Susan observed. "This is just the sort of thing which makes one realize, after all, that these places are rather sordid."

"I don't think you need feel like that," Grant assured her. "As a matter of fact, a very interesting situation has developed. Itash, unlike most of his race, seems to have been a little communicative to the girl. Now he has made her wildly jealous and she threatens to talk. I believe that he is terrified."

"Talk? What about?"

"LADY SUSAN," he said, dropping his voice a little, and drawing his chair nearer to hers, "you have been your father's confidante to some extent, and I dare say you can understand that, while these congressional meetings are going on at Nice, we are in the center of a very hotbed of intrigue. The threads sometimes show themselves in the most unlikely places. I rather fancy that there is one of them to be caught hold of here."

"How exciting!" she murmured. "I felt sure, from something dad said, that there was trouble brewing. Who's misbehaving, Grant?"

"The two from whom trouble was always to be apprehended," he answered. "It's all tremendously interesting, only what I can't understand is how a close-mouthed fellow like Itash could ever have let a word escape him. As a matter of fact, the girl herself said that he hadn't. And yet she knows. She has given me plenty to think about already."

They danced again once or twice. Afterward Susan was claimed by Lymane, and Grant strolled across toward the bar. As soon as she saw him alone, Mademoiselle Cleo rose to her feet with the obvious intention of joining him. Itash laid his hand upon her wrist, leaned forward and spoke to her angrily. She only laughed. Grant, however, who had caught the young man's expression, was suddenly anxious. He had a feeling that the field of action had broadened, that they were no longer in the little night restaurant, but in the arena of a prospective and far-reaching battleground. Itash, his face dark with anger, had risen to his feet. Yvonne came up and touched him on the arm. He only pushed her away. She went off, laughing, with some one else. Cleo, ignoring Itash's attempts to detain her, came smiling toward Grant.

"I am afraid," he said politely, "that you are in trouble."

"Yes," she assented. "I am in trouble with my friend, Count Itash. If he knew what I had told you—especially if he knew what I am going to tell you—he would certainly kill me. The most amusing part of it is that, as he sits there, biting his nails and cudgeling his brains, he cannot imagine how it is that I know."

"How do you know?" Grant asked curiously. "Have you spied upon him, listened to private conversations, stolen his papers?"

"No one of these," she answered. "Yet I know. I know of the great plot, started six years ago and now rapidly drawing near to fruition."

"Are you going to tell me about it?"

"As I learn the details, yes," she promised. "Day by day and week by week, you shall know everything. In the meantime, alas, I must make friends with him again. Unless we are friends there are some things which I shall never know. But when I do know them, you shall be told. It is my will to wreck his schemes."

"WHO is working with him?" Grant inquired.

She looked across the room to where the young man's vengeful eyes seemed to be glaring at them from behind his spectacles.

"Your intelligence should tell you that," she replied. "Germany, of course. Well, I like Germany well enough. They are a great people. I am not so fond of England. But Itash is to be destroyed."

"Is it my fancy," Grant asked, as she rose to her feet, "but are you just a little unforgiving?"

She looked back at him over her shoulder.

"I despise all people," she said, "who forgive. I never change, I never forgive, I never forget, I never break a promise. I go back to Itash now because there are things I do not know, but he will have little joy of me. I promise you that."

She swung across the room, laughed down at the young man who awaited her, and sat by his side. He began talking in a low, fierce tone. She leaned back, fanning herself. Grant returned to his own table.

"A very amusing place, this," he observed. "What about another bottle of wine?"

"Certainly not," Susan declared. "Arthur has paid the bill, and we've made up our minds to go. Bobby has danced five times with that girl with the ginger hair. You have absented yourself twice with the nondescript young woman. And I have come to the conclusion that this is no place for a nice girl to spend a happy evening."

"Believe me," Grant began.

"Not a word," she interrupted. "We're all going home. Three o'clock, and tennis to-morrow before lunch. Of course," she concluded, "you needn't come, unless you want to. As a matter of fact, though, I should think you've made quite enough mischief for one night. The Japanese youth looked as though he were trying to think out some complicated form of murder for you, when you disappeared with the young woman."

"I shouldn't be surprised if his thoughts were turning that way," Grant admitted. "He's a sulky brute. Hullo! Here's Andrews! I wonder what's up?"

The young man who had just entered approached Lymane and whispered in his ear. They talked for a few minutes in agitated monosyllables. Then Lymane turned toward the others.

"Andrews has just brought some extraordinary news," he announced. "Baron Nago motored over from Nice to the Villa to-night, was taken ill and died there an hour or so ago."

Grant looked across the room. Itash was still talking volubly. Cleo was still listening with the same inscrutable look.

GERTRUDE was more than content with her luncheon companion, on the following morning. In some subtle but unmistakable way Grant's attitude seemed to have changed. He looked at her with undisguised admiration and the table which he had selected was in the most secluded corner of the famous restaurant at the end of the Arcade. She gave a little cry of delight as she leaned over the great bowl of pink roses which were awaiting her.

"How beautiful!" she exclaimed.

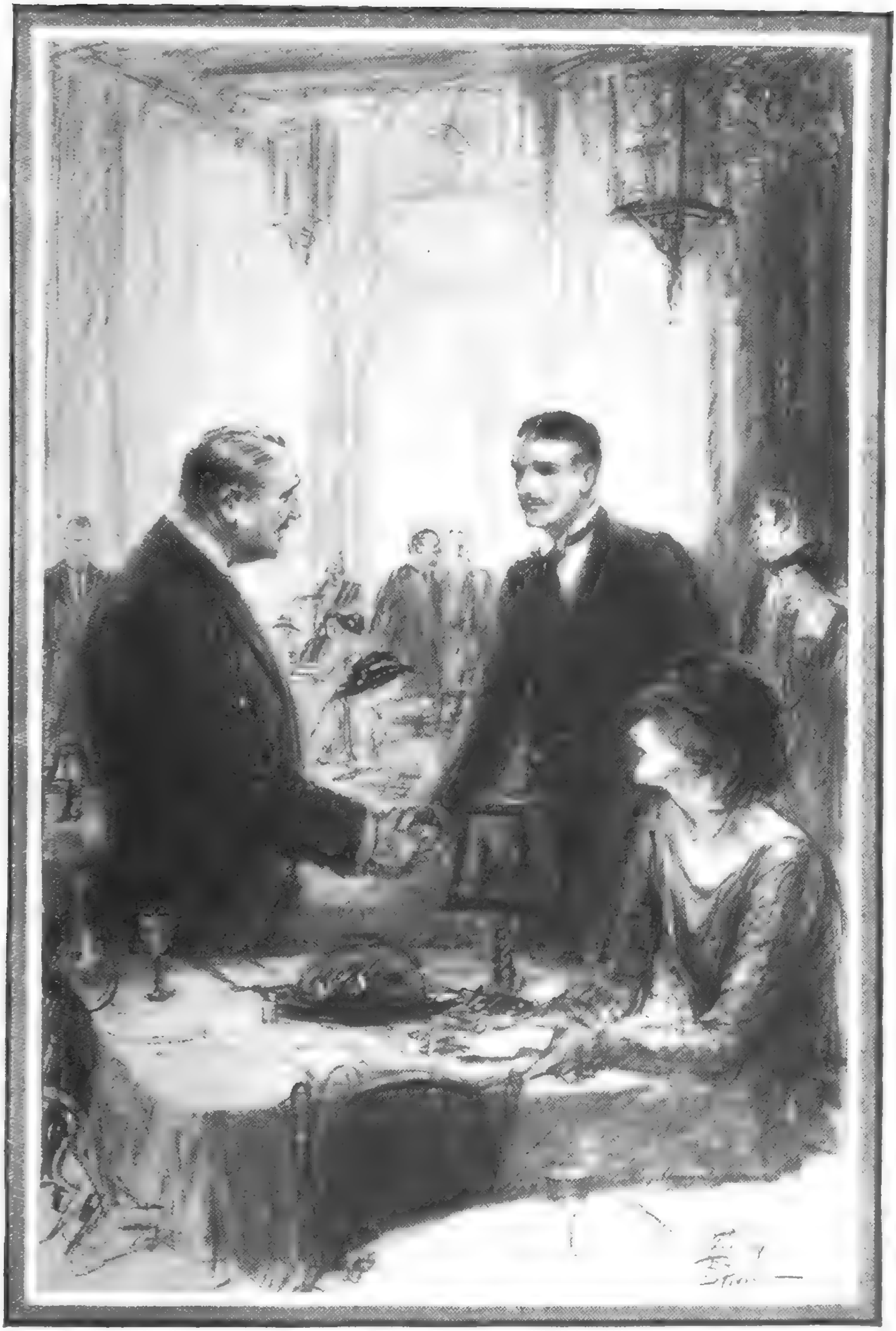
"How wonderful to have you here!" he murmured gallantly.

She looked at him with a faint air of surprise. Yesterday he had seemed all reserve, even a little cold. To-day his deportment was almost that of a lover.

"Why are you so much nicer than yesterday?" she asked, as she took her place.

"My resistance is weakening," he confessed.

She gave a little sigh of content.



"Mr. Slattery is one of my oldest friends," she continued. "We were children together in Washington." Mr. Blum beamed.

"I think," she confided, "that I am going to enjoy my luncheon. Before we say another word—tell me some more about this horrible tragedy. What was it? Heart disease?"

Grant nodded.

"The doctor thought so. I believe that he is making a further examination."

"Why did Nago motor all the way from the other side of Nice to see Lord Yeovil so late last night?" she inquired.

"Something to do with the meeting at Nice," he replied indifferently. "Let's talk about ourselves, Gertrude."

Again she looked at him, half curiously, half with gratification.

"You are really much nicer than the Lymane boy," she declared, "and I thought that I should have to rely upon him for a flirtation."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," he announced bruskly.

"Mayn't I dine with him?"

"No," was the firm reply. "He has his work to attend to and you have me to look after."

She gave her undivided attention for a few moments to the hors d'œuvres and made a selection.

"Well," she decided, "we will postpone the discussion."

"If a flirtation is necessary to your peace of mind," he continued, "I must dig into the memories of my own somber past."

"Dear me!" she sighed. "I am afraid poor Otto is going to be very jealous."

"I was very jealous of him once," Grant reminded her. "It's his turn, now."

"How much are you in earnest?" she asked curiously.

"I shall endeavor to show you."

"The life of an attractive woman," she murmured, "is full of complications."

"So are the lives of her victims," he commented. "Besides, there happens to be a little owing to this particular victim."

"Owing?" she repeated.

"I mean it. If you have any thoughts to spare from your husband, any kindness to give, any affection to bestow, those gifts belong to me."

Again she looked at him searchingly.

"Why are you so changed since yesterday?"

"Yesterday the old soreness had come back," he explained. "I loved you and hated you. To-day things seem to have fallen into a clearer perspective. I don't hate you any more."

"And do you—still love me a little?"

He looked into her eyes, which, before his earnest gaze, became faintly troubled.

"Grant," she whispered, "I don't know whether I want you to talk to me like this. I have a horrible feeling that somehow you're not serious. And besides—supposing I were to lose my head."

"Even then," he said, "you might look upon it as—atonement."

She became silent for a time, obviously disturbed. The subjects which had filled her mind had been forcibly ejected.

"I can't think—really I can't think, Grant, what possessed me in those days," she murmured reminiscently. "Otto was so furiously in love with me, and he was so violent. I hesitated and then he seemed to have it all his own way. And I rather wanted to be a princess."

"Don't let's talk about the past," he begged, his mouth hardening a little. "The only correct philosophy is to live from day to day. Let us talk about to-day—and then to-morrow."

She was almost embarrassed.

"Grant, dear," she expostulated, "you mustn't make love to me like that before every one. Prince Lutrecht always comes here to lunch and Cornelius Blum arrived early this morning."

"Cornelius Blum," Grant repeated; "one of the most interesting men in Europe, I should think."

"He is an intimate friend of my husband's," she remarked dryly, "and for a widower, he's rather great on the domestic virtues. If we meet him, I'll present you."

"How much of the rest of your day am I permitted to claim?" he inquired. "I should think we could dodge this virtue-loving millionaire somehow or other."

"But what about poor Mr. Lymane?" she demanded. "He has sent me a roomful of roses already this morning."

"Life," Grant declared, "is going to be full of disappointments for that young man."

THE restaurant, which had been almost empty at their coming, had now filled up. Gertrude looked about her in surprise.

"Why, I never saw these people come

in!" she declared. "There's Prince Lutrecht over there. And a whole party of your friends. I don't think Lady Susan likes me."

Susan nodded and smiled across the room. Her eyes, however, had a shade of reproach in them as they met Grant's.

"Like you? Of course she likes you," he protested. "If there's an unpopular one in the party, it isn't you. Look how Lymane is glaring at me. Gertrude, you won't dine with him, will you?"

"MY DEAR Grant, how on earth am I going to get out of it?" she asked.

"I'll get you out of it all right," he promised. "Tell me, who is the corpulent gentleman of pleasant appearance, with the hat too small for his head, who is standing upon the threshold, beaming at you?"

"That is Cornelius Blum," she whispered. "He's a dear thing. Do be civil to him, for my sake. He could make mischief with Otto if he wanted to, and I'm afraid he's coming to speak to me."

The newcomer, stout, genial and jovial, was crossing the room, smiling as if the whole of Monte Carlo were some tremendous joke and the fact of meeting the Princess its supreme consummation. He lumbered up like a great elephant, moving clumsily on his rather short legs. But the air with which he raised Gertrude's fingers to his lips was that of a courtier.

"Why, Princess!" he exclaimed. "How delightful to find you, and how good for one's national self-respect to discover that no one in this wonderful place can even hold a candle to a compatriot!"

"Always a flatterer," she smiled. "Let me introduce Mr. Grant Slattery—Mr. Cornelius Blum."

Mr. Blum shook hands pleasantly, but without enthusiasm. His manner suggested that Grant's presence as Gertrude's sole companion needed some further explanation.

"Mr. Slattery is one of my oldest friends," she continued. "We were children together in Washington."

Mr. Blum beamed. A great smile seemed to rise from his depths. He was a man of sentiment and he recognized the claim of old friendship. He took the affair under his protection.

"Delightful!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Slattery, you must not doubt my sincerity when I say that it is always a pleasure to meet an American. I am no stranger to New York. I was one of the first who dared show himself there after the terrible days of the war. I was a youngster then—but it hurt. Still, I said to myself, I will go there. It is the home of many of my race. If there is still bad feeling between us, it must perish. And it has perished. Of that I am assured. It has, indeed."

"Do you travel in England, too?" Grant asked.

Mr. Blum was no longer a completely happy man. He sighed.

"In England—no," he answered. "That is another matter. Princess, I kiss your fingers. My luncheon will be a happier meal for the pleasure you have brought into the room. Mr. Slattery, I envy you, sir. So does every man here, but I bear you no grudge."

He departed, ponderous yet light-footed, elephantine yet dignified.

"Do you know what I did yesterday?" Grant asked.

"Tell me!" she begged.

"I wired to Cannes for my yacht. It should be here to-morrow."

She looked at him for a moment steadily. Then a tinge of color stole into her cheeks. She seemed a little nervous.

"I wish I knew which was the real Grant," she murmured.

"What do you mean?"

"The Grant of yesterday—or the Grant of to-day."

"ONE needs to be long-suffering to cope with one's friends," Susan remarked, when an hour later she found herself seated side by side with Grant on a bench at the tennis courts. "Last night you showed marked attentions to a dancer; this morning you have been flirting disgracefully with that beautiful princess, thereby reducing poor Arthur to despair, and now you propose to devote a few minutes to me for the first time to-day. I am beginning to fear, Mr. Grant Slattery, that you are going to be a disappointment to me."

"Not at tennis, anyhow," he assured her. "You and I are going to wipe the ground with the Lancasters."

"Our thoughts are on different planes," she declared. "I speak of life and you of tennis. I think we shall beat them, if you stand up to the net and don't poach."

"How's your father to-day?" he asked a little abruptly.

"Quite all right, considering. It must have been a terrible shock to him to see that poor man collapse with scarcely a moment's warning."

"Nago was a great statesman," Grant remarked. "One of the last of the old school. Come on, it's our court."

ON THE way across, an acquaintance hailed Grant. By his side stood Count Itash, sometimes called Sammy.

"Slattery, Count Itash says that he has only an informal acquaintance with you and would like an introduction," the former said. "Count Itash, Mr. Grant Slattery."

Grant held out his hand. The other, after a momentary hesitation, accepted it. He was an insignificant-looking person among the athletic young men by whom he was surrounded, but his eyes, behind his horn-rimmed spectacles, were exceptionally hard and piercing.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Slattery," he said.

"Who's your little friend, Grant?" young Lancaster inquired curiously, out on the court. "He's the fellow we saw at the Carlton last night, isn't he?"

"That's the chap," Grant replied. "He rejoices in the name of Itash. I believe that I have heard that he is attached to the Japanese Embassy in Berlin and is doing secretarial work for their section here. Queer-looking card, isn't he?"

"I couldn't make out where I'd seen him before," Lancaster observed. "I remember now; I used to see him driving about with Baron Nago. Dismal-looking beggar, isn't he?"

"I expect the poor young man is upset about his chief," Susan remarked.

After they had won their match, Susan again spoke of Itash—and of the girl with whom Grant had danced.

"I shall assure him that I am not a serious rival for her favors," he rejoined. "The young man shall be comforted."

"Got your hands pretty full as it is, haven't you?"

"Look here!" Grant said severely. "Kindly remember that I have just steered you to victory on the tennis courts, and in a day or two, if you behave yourself, I will be able to take you for a cruise. Incidentally, I should be glad if you would further bear in mind the fact that I am a great many years your senior. A little more respect, please. Now, come along, and I'll give you a lift down to the club for tea."

"Thank you. I thought of going with Bobby."

"You may have thought of it, but you are coming with me," he insisted.

"Rather a bully, aren't you?" she observed coolly. "However, perhaps I'd better. Bobby gets so affectionate in those little voitures, thinks one needs steadying all the time. You're above that sort of thing, aren't you?"

"The springs of my Rolls-Royce," he began.

"Oh, bother the springs of your Rolls-Royce!" she interrupted. "I'm coming with you because I want to get to the club quickly and because I like your car."

"The worst of being a millionaire!" Grant complained gloomily, as he took his place at the wheel. "One is tolerated only for one's possessions."

"They're generally the best thing about a millionaire," Susan declared. "All the same, if there were an unattached English one in the market, I think that I should like to marry him."

"What's the matter with a perfectly good American one?" he suggested.

"Entrancing idea, but illusionary," she rejoined dryly. "I hate syndicates, or réchauffés. I'm going to tidy up, Grant. Try and get the round table in the corner."

She jumped out and ran lightly up the steps. Grant backed his car to the pavement and was in the act of following her when the blue-liveried commissionaire, hat in hand, accosted him mysteriously.

"A young lady asked me to give you this as soon as you arrived, sir," he announced, presenting a twisted-up half sheet of paper.

"Sure it's for me?" Grant asked a little doubtfully.

"Mr. Grant Slattery," the man declared. "The young person knew your name, sir."

Grant thrust the note into his waistcoat pocket. He felt a curious conviction as to its source. To add a touch of coincidence to the affair, on the opposite side of the way, Itash was leaning over the wall, apparently watching the shipping in the harbor.

As a yachtsman, Mr. Cornelius Blum did not shine sartorially. As a guest and conversationalist at Grant's improvised cruise on the following day he was easily the most popular man on board. Susan, who had been his neighbor at lunch, watched him pacing the deck, with a look almost of affection in her face.

"Princess," she confided to Gertrude, "I think your friend, Mr. Blum, is the most amusing man I've ever met."

Gertrude smiled. "He is one of these impossible persons who never grow up," she declared. "A picnic like this is the joy of his life. He was simply delighted when I gave him Mr. Slattery's message. The strange part of it is that he can scarcely cross the gangway of a steamer without being violently ill. Yet a cruise like this he simply revels in."

"Make his fortune as a raconteur on the music-hall stage," Bobby Lancaster chuckled.

"Grant," said Susan, "I adore your yacht."

"She really is wonderful," Gertrude said. "You hadn't anything like this in the old days, had you?"

"Perhaps it was as well," Susan murmured, with a rare impulse of spitefulness.

Gertrude smiled across at her rival. Grant had scarcely left her side all day and she was beginning to feel a little sorry for this very charming young English girl to whom her coming was likely to prove so disastrous. Even the picnic had been arranged at her suggestion.

"Well, the yacht has arrived, and other things," she remarked. "It is never too late in this world, so long as one has the will. Grant, I want to go to the Dutch East Indies."

"I'd better tell him to put in at Naples and coal, then," he suggested.

"You will kindly remember," Susan observed, "that you have the Prime Minister of the greatest empire in the world on board, who will be needed at Nice at a quarter to eleven to-morrow morning to preside over the little tea party there."

"That is unfortunate," Gertrude sighed. "Such a quarrelsome little tea party too, isn't it?"

Lymane, who was seated in the little circle, moved in his chair uneasily. Grant turned slightly toward her.

"Quarrelsome, is it?" he repeated. "How do you know that?"

"Oh, the air is full of rumors," she answered carelessly. "Yesterday, for instance, every one was saying that that poor dear Baron Nago had committed suicide because America was to be invited once more to come into the Pact."

"I thought it was because he found he had one funnel too many on his latest cruiser," Bobby Lancaster remarked.

"Idiot!" his sister exclaimed. "That's the business of the Limitation of Armaments Congress, not the Pact."

"Nago, as a matter of fact, represented his country on both Boards," Lymane pointed out. "Too much for one man. I know that he dreaded that journey to Washington every year."

The stewards appeared with tea. Lord Yeovil and Cornelius Blum joined the little group. The latter removed his hat, dragged his chair out to where he could get the full benefit of the sunlight and the breeze, and smiled on every one beatifically.

"Mr. Slattery," he said, "you are, without exception, the most fortunate man in the world. You own the most perfect yacht I have ever seen, you have no business or other cares, you have the friends who make a man happy. It is a wonderful existence."

Grant smiled.

"Rather a lazy one, I am afraid," he admitted.

"Laziness is the only sound philosophy of life," Blum insisted. "If you have no need to work for yourself, why do it? If you spend your time working for others, you meet with nothing but ingratitude. I grudge the time I have to give to the management of my own affairs, but I am always deeply grateful that I was never tempted to dabble in politics. I am training up young men, and in five years' time I shall be free from all cares. When that time comes, I shall lie like a lizard in the sun of good fortune. I will never write a little letter, and seldom read a newspaper."

"I thought that all Germans were politicians by instinct, from their cradle upward," Lord Yeovil remarked, smiling.

"Not in these days," Blum replied, helping himself to his third cake. "My father, of course, was a rabid politician, but he lived in terrible days. A prosperous Germany is so much to the good, of course, but her sons naturally lack the inspiration of what used to be known as patriotism. The fact of it is," he went on, "that industrially Germany has come in for a great inheritance. If she had been as prosperous in 1914 as she is to-day, that wicked old Kaiser of ours might have rattled his saber forever and no one would have listened. What people have often failed to understand about my country is that we are not seekers after glory. We want money and the ease and comfort and happy days that money brings."

"You don't think that Germany wants another war, then?" Bobby Lancaster asked.

"My dear young man," Blum assured him emphatically, "there isn't a leader living or a cause in existence which could induce the German of to-day to exchange the loom for the sword. There isn't a nation which rejoices so thoroughly in the Pact. I thought that this was absolutely understood by now. Even the English sensationalists have begun to trust us."

He smiled around upon them all. Somehow or other he seemed to feel the inspiration of the circle of interested auditors.

"There is only one thing needed," he continued, "which my friends the politicians tell me would end the last hopes of the militarists, and that is that the Pact of Nations, over which my honored friend here, Lord Yeovil, so ably presides, should induce the United States of America to join it and abandon forever her present aloofness. I do not understand myself the means by which this could be done or the etiquette necessary, but as a representative German citizen, my hand of comradeship is ready at any moment."

"I wonder," Lord Yeovil speculated, "whether you really do speak as a representative German citizen."

"BELIEVE me, I do," was the earnest reply. "My simple tastes in life are shared by millions. What the German of to-day wants is his beer, his wine, his music, and his women-folk. He wants to spend his spare time with his children and to be able to buy his little home early in life. I am not a great traveler; I don't know how it is with other nations. I know how it is with my own. We want to live out our days comfortably and pleasantly. We are natural human beings, filled with natural desires. I have eaten too many cakes. I shall walk for a little time, or I shall have no appetite for this wonderful dinner, which our gracious host has promised us. Princess, will you do me the honor?"

Gertrude rose from her place.

"I am not a great walker, Mr. Blum," she warned, "but for ten minutes I will be your companion."

"That ten minutes," he rejoined, "will be the crown of my day."

They all looked after him a little curiously, as he stepped out upon his promenade. Lord Yeovil was very much interested.

"I am delighted, Grant," he said to Slattery, "that you have given me an opportunity through your friend, the Princess von Diss, of meeting Mr. Blum. I find him an extraordinarily intriguing personality."

"FOR a multimillionaire he seems to be a very simple creature," Rose Lancaster observed.

"'Multi' is inadequate," Grant interposed. "He is reputed to be worth anything from forty to sixty million pounds. It is hard to see how any one could have handled such wealth and have remained so apparently ingenuous."

"Do you distrust him?" Susan asked, a little bluntly.

Grant hesitated. He seemed to be watching Gertrude and Blum as they walked together—Gertrude superbly beautiful, walking with the perfect grace of her long limbs and exquisite poise, Blum striding along cheerfully by her side, a figure by contrast almost of absurdity.

"Well, I don't know," he acknowledged. "You all remember what our own Ambassador said many years ago: 'Trust everybody but a German, and trust a German—when he is dead.'"

Lord Yeovil smiled. "Notwithstanding, Grant," he confessed, "I have a leaning towards Mr. Blum. I am almost sorry that he is not a politician. I would rather have him seated at the Conference table than our friend Lutrecht. What about a rubber of bridge until cocktail time? We can play on deck."

Blum stopped short in his promenade.

"Bridge?" he repeated with a broad smile. "Did I hear some one say anything about bridge?"

"Mr. Blum is a fanatic," Gertrude declared. "Grant, you will have to come and entertain me, unless you are very anxious to play."

He rose at once to his feet and gave an order to the steward he had summoned.

"I will show you the chart room," he suggested. "There are plenty to play without me."

They strolled off together. Susan sat watching them with interlaced fingers. Suddenly she became aware that Blum's eyes were upon her.

"Lady Susan and I against any two," he proposed jovially.

SUSAN cut out after one rubber, and Rose Lancaster took her place. Grant, who meanwhile had returned, crossed over and sank into a chair by Susan's side.

"Any luck?" he inquired.

"Thirty francs, thanks to Mr. Blum. He's a daring bidder but he plays his cards wonderfully."

"A most interesting character," he remarked.

"Father seems to like him," she agreed. "The only German he ever has liked."

"And you?"

"I like him, too. Or rather I think I do," she replied after a moment's hesitation. "There are just odd moments when he gives me rather a quaint impression of insincerity. I dare say that's fancy. Grant, you're giving us a wonderful day."

"I want it to be," he answered. "It's very nice to get you all here, and I fancy it must be rather a relief to your father to be free for a few hours. No messages or cables possible. Hello."

He looked up at the masthead. Susan followed his example. There was a little crackling of blue fire there.

"I'm afraid I spoke too soon," he pointed out. "The wireless is evidently working. I meant to have had it disconnected."

Lord Yeovil, who was playing a hand, paused for a moment and looked up curiously.

"I SHOULD like to have been Prime Minister to Queen Elizabeth," he grumbled. "One might have had a chance of a few hours' holiday then."

"Not you, dad!" Susan exclaimed. "You'd have found making love to her all the time much more strenuous than law-making."

"My knowledge of history is slight," her father rejoined, "but I don't fancy that Queen Elizabeth showed much amorous interest in elderly widowers."

The Marconi operator presented a message to Lord Yeovil. He tore it open, nodded, and waited till the young man had retired. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he glanced across toward Gertrude, who was leaning against the rail, with Lymane by her side.

"My news is official," he said, "but there is, I imagine, no secrecy about it. It will probably interest you, Princess."

"Me!" Gertrude exclaimed, looking genuinely surprised.

"It is a cable from Berlin," Lord Yeovil continued, "which Andrews has wirelessed on to me: 'Baron Katina left this morning with cabled credentials to take Nago's place here. I am informed that he is accompanied by Prince von Diss.' "

"Otto! My husband!" Gertrude cried.

Lord Yeovil assented. "Is your husband, by any chance, a Japanese scholar, Princess?" he asked.

"He understands Japanese," she replied. "He learnt it at Tokyo years ago. He has been over there once or twice since on missions."

"That probably explains the matter," Lord Yeovil pointed out. "Katina has the reputation of being a great diplomatist, but he has only just commenced the study of European languages. The Prince is probably coming with him as interpreter."

Gertrude's face was, for a moment, scarcely beautiful. She was looking across at Grant. Susan intercepted the glance and laughed a little maliciously.

"What a catastrophe!" she murmured.

A steward handed round cocktails. Blum looked at the beautiful glasses, with their slight frosting, and rose to his feet as he accepted one.

"To my friend and host," he said, addressing Grant. "I drink to you fervently, sir. You are the prince of hosts. Three minutes ago, I felt that slight uneasy sensation, that faint but insistent desire for alcoholic sustenance, which sometimes prompts me at about seven o'clock to press the bell for my own butler, or if I am in an hotel or at my club, to make certain suggestions to the waiter. The feeling comes and within three minutes it is gratified. Wonderful!"

He raised his glass to his lips and emptied it.

"Have another," Grant invited. "There's a shakerful behind."

"I will," Mr. Blum agreed, without hesitation. "I like your cocktails, sir. I like the time and manner in which they are served. I like everything about them. It is indeed a very happy day. I am going two 'no trumps.' "

GERTRUDE raised her glass. "Well," she said, "I suppose I must drink to the end of my grass-widowhood."

She looked across at Grant. He smiled inscrutably.

"You anticipate," he reminded her. "The Prince cannot arrive until the morning after to-morrow."

She paused. "In that case," she decided, "I shall drink to something else."

Dinner, served as they crept at half-speed toward the harbor, was a wonderful meal. Grant's chef, who had ransacked Monte Carlo on the previous day, and motored over to Nice to collect the materials for one of his favorite sauces, had surpassed himself. Every one except Gertrude seemed to be in the highest possible spirits. Cornelius Blum, growing pinker with every course, sat like an overgrown and overfilled child—sometimes witty, sometimes ingenuous, always amusing. Rose Lancaster on one side, and Susan on the other, were admirable and appreciative foils for his gallantries. Gertrude, on Grant's right, was a little silent and intense; Lymane, on her other side, sulky and inclined to be melodramatic. He was continually endeavoring to inveigle his neighbor into a whispered conversation which she as persistently discouraged. She declined altogether to take him seriously.

"My dear man," she protested, "don't you understand the situation? I cannot flirt with you any longer. My husband will be here within a few hours. I must bring myself into the necessary state of mind to receive him. It is a calamity, perhaps, but it must be borne."

"You have the whole of to-morrow," he muttered.

"It will take me the whole of to-morrow to find myself," she assured him. "Here have I been encouraging Mr. Slattery and, at any rate, listening to you, with all the license of a fairly respectable but susceptible grass widow. Otto is very jealous and I am a very dutiful wife. I have little more than twenty-four hours to forget you both. I must be left entirely alone. I have promised to dine with Mr. Slattery to-morrow night, and a promise is a thing I never break. I warn him, however, that it will be—well——"

"I rather understood," Lymane interrupted bitterly, "that you were dining with me, and coming somewhere to dance afterwards."

"That was the night after, my friend," she replied. "And alas! There's nothing in the least modern about Otto. I'll give every one fair warning that while he is here I shall not be allowed to dine or flirt with any one. To-morrow night is my last evening of freedom. Don't be surprised, Grant, if I lead you a terrible dance."

"WHY should they have a dinner to themselves?" Cornelius Blum exclaimed, turning to Rose Lancaster. "I will give a dinner party to-morrow night. I invite everybody. I have some other friends, over at Nice. I will wire them. Prince Lutrecht and his wife shall come. I will spend the whole of to-morrow arranging it. I cannot equal this festival, but I will see what can be done. Accept quickly, please, every one of you."

There was a little affirmative chorus. Cornelius Blum looked across at Gertrude. She set her lips and shook her head.

"I shall not give up my own dinner," she declared defiantly, "and I decline to let Mr. Slattery off."

"Very well," Blum acquiesced, good-humoredly. "I shall either alter the date of mine or it shall be in opposition. I shall probably have refinements which have never been thought of before. I shall have the roof removed from the Hôtel de Paris for a quarter of an hour only and presents dropped down from airplanes for every one. I shall have Mademoiselle Lebrun from Nice to sing for us and Coquinet to tell us stories. I shall——"

"DON'T give it all away," Gertrude interrupted. "If you are trying to tempt me, I am quite firm. If you give your dinner to-morrow night, I shall dine with Mr. Slattery."

"My attitude toward your husband in this matter," Blum declared, "will be one of pained but remorseful silence."

"So long as it really is silence," Gertrude laughed.

"I have ordered coffee and liqueurs on deck," Grant announced. "We are just entering the bay and the moon is up. You ladies may need your wraps, but it is quite warm."

They trooped up the companionway. Grant looked for Susan, but she had hurried on with young Lancaster. On deck they found that they were already headed for the narrow opening between the red and green lamps of the harbor. The great sweep of the bay was outlined by a glittering arc of lights, the towering hillside in the background was bespangled with little points of fire. The Casino flared out in front. The moon, yellower and fuller at every moment, seemed to give a note almost of artificiality to the little scene; they could even hear the sound of music from the open windows of the Concert Room. Susan and Lancaster found their way into the bows and stood watching the phosphorus. Lymane brought coffee to Gertrude where she sat close to the rail.

"Do you really mean it about to-morrow?" he asked.

"Of course I do. Why not?"

"You were not engaged to dine with Grant Slattery," he complained; "you made that up."

"What if I did?" she answered coolly. "Mr. Slattery is an old friend; he is very amusing and he talks about things that interest me."

"Don't I?" he demanded.

"To be quite frank, you don't," she confessed. "You are very young, you know, and you think because you are private secretary to the Prime Minister that you have to wrap yourself in a mantle of impenetrable reserve. I'm positively ill at ease talking to you. I am so afraid that I shall ask something which will provoke one of your diplomatic replies."

He leaned a little nearer to her.

"Come out to supper with me to-night," he begged. "And I'll talk about anything you like in the world."

"Supper to-night?" she repeated, a little dubiously. "But shan't we be tired?"

"No," he answered eagerly. "You can rest for two or three hours. Let me call for you, say, at twelve o'clock."

She considered the matter for a moment. Then she nodded.

"Well, you can come and see me, anyway, at twelve o'clock," she agreed. "You're a nice boy, and I didn't really mean to be angry with you. You remember our bargain?"

"Rather!" he answered rapturously.

She looked over her shoulder. Grant had descended from the bridge and was coming down the deck. For once the young man was quick to understand.

"I shan't say a word about it, of course," he assured her.

She laughed back at him.

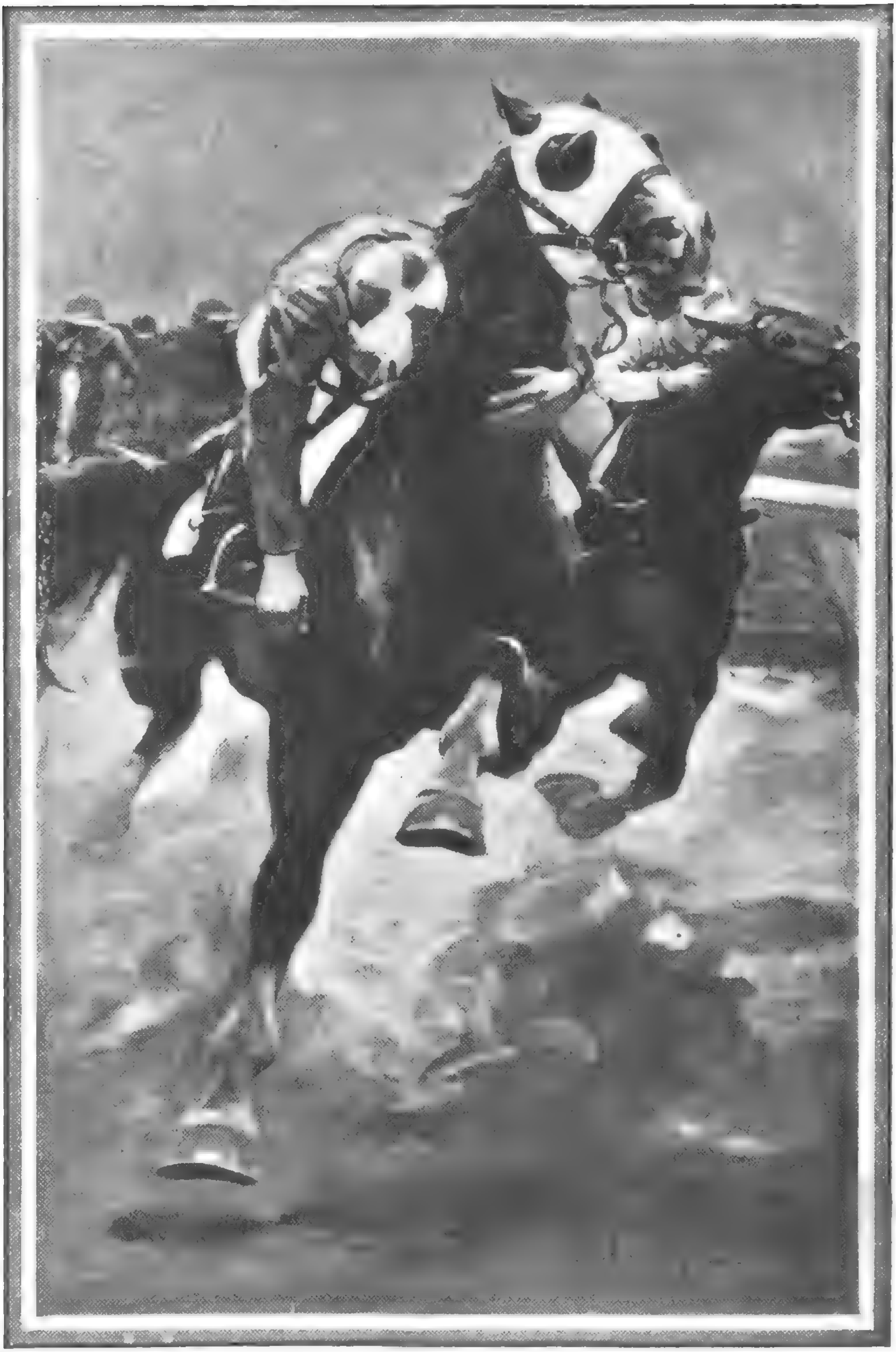
"I see there are hopes for you, after all," she declared.

GRANT walked into the Carlton at a quarter past twelve that evening, the exact hour mentioned by Cleo in the note which the commissionaire at the Sporting Club had given to him. He left his coat and hat in the coat room, made his way inside the restaurant, which was as yet sparsely occupied, and, ignoring the efforts of the maître d'hôtel to provide him with a table, strolled across to where Cleo was seated alone. She welcomed him with a bare uplifting of the eyebrows, the barest possible smile.

"You permit me?" he asked, with his hand on the back of her chair.

"Certainly," she assented. "Sit down, if you wish; but I have changed my mind. I have nothing to say to you."

A bold abduction by yacht and a mutiny are two interesting developments in the second instalment of "The Wrath to Come"—in March EVERYBODY'S, on sale February 15.



All at once Tim felt himself slipping. There wasn't any Rupert Dale—just a black void into which he was dropping.

The First of a New Racetrack Series

For Sake of a Lady

Tim the Jockey a Tip-Sheet Peddler! What a Fall! But a Girl Supplied the Spark of New Ambition

By Sam Carson

Illustration by Albin Henning

THE bugle was sounding for the third race at Churchill Downs when Tim Moore first saw Alice Neil. She was in a hurry—a great hurry. Street cars from Louisville to the track have a habit of taking their time down crowded Fourth Street. And the girl was late.

Tim was short, and fat, and shabby. His eyes showed the wisdom that comes with experience. He knew at the first glance that this girl in filmy blue had no business riding out on a trolley; she belonged in a closed car, with, perhaps, a liveried driver. So, as she paused, gazing hesitantly, first at the clubhouse entrance, then at the wide reach of the main entrance, where hundreds stood in queues before the mutuel paying-off windows, Tim approached, his bow legs telling the story of a jockey who is on the ground for life. He extended a dirty hand which held a flimsy envelope—sealed.

"Stable and Paddock selections—lady! Picked three winners yesterday—all for fifty cents."

Her instinctive shrinking was a natural reaction. Tip-sheet peddlers, like touts, are barred from operating within racetrack enclosures. Wherefore they must work swiftly at the entrances. And Tim Moore, although he was only twenty-four, had lost the litheness of form that had been his in his riding days. Indeed, he resembled an impudent gnome, oversized in the middle, tapering out both ways. In justice to his features, however, his face wasn't a bit gnomelike; his hair was still curly; and his nose was straight, albeit freckles adorned a slightly flushed countenance.

Tim was glad his competitors had retired, as his prospective customer bit her lip thoughtfully and forgot she was in such a hurry. Afterward, no doubt the tipster would describe her at length. But never would he achieve a more truthful version of his present estimate:

"A knockout—a blue-eyed princess who'd eclipse these shop-window dames."

He forgot other details for his future description when she spoke.

"Is it—do you think your selections will pick three winners to-day?"

Tim grinned. "It's a pretty smart handicapper who puts out these selections, lady. He averages slipping three over every day. So far," he added, "we've missed—unless he puts his horse over in the third. They're at the post now."

"I'll take one," she decided hastily, fumbling in her bag. Tim did not realize how agitated she was until she dropped a card with the half dollar into his extended palm. He was staring at the pasteboard slip, wondering, when something caused him to look up. The girl, with the mimeographed sheet torn from the envelope, was returning.

"This sixth race," she inquired; "no winner is given—it's blank—why is it?"

"That's the information horse," Tim explained, "—the five-dollar special."

Now Tim adhered to the rule of his business, which is, first of all, not to disclose the information horse. The information horse is one that has been pointed to win—usually a claiming race—at long odds. The entry's condition is guarded jealously. But there are leaks. There are many itching palms among stable employees. And handicappers who sell their selections sift out reports until they are certain of at least one intended killing. Then the information horse is selected and given out—at a price.

"BUT—I need an in-information horse," the girl protested. "I'm having such bad luck."

It was not the first time Tim Moore had listened to feminine entreaties; many and varied they were, in type, method and motive. But this girl, whose card bore the name of Alice Neil, was different. There was something desperate about the way she clutched the envelope.

From the shifting black belt visible between sections of the stands, a roar grew in volume. The third race was running.

Tim noted the girl's tense air. Here was no gambler. She needed money—badly. He wondered what deep motive had sent her into this joust with chance.

The roar swelled into one prolonged scream, then died. A man dashed around the corner nearest the entrance and shouted a name.

"Missed—again," Tim observed. "Lady—play the selections all the way." He came nearer. "Winnow—in the sixth—that's our information horse," he whispered from the corner of his mouth. "And don't give me away. It'll be curtains for Tim Moore if you do."

She hurried away toward the ticket booth. Tim watched her thoughtfully, saw her pass through the turnstile, then caught an occasional glimpse of blue threading the growing throng before the paying-off windows. "Hope my boss puts over his special to-day," Tim muttered; "he's two days overdue—and I need a race too. Sister, I'm a softy for breaking my word, but here's hoping."

Winnow did go over; the veteran selling plater was sent for six furlongs under young Johnny Dodge, about the most clever apprentice at Churchill Downs and stayed in front every jump of the way. Winnow had been a handicap horse and his rest of three weeks, coupled with the warmth of an early June day, formed an unbeatable combination. Winnow paid forty-eight dollars for each two-dollar mutuel ticket. When Tim Moore heard the news he threw the remainder of his stock in trade into the air and trotted down Central Avenue to a certain soft-drink stand and pool room where, for a price, white liquor, with the strength of a heavyweight's stiffest punch, was served.

By doing that Tim Moore missed the sincere gratitude of a slim girl in blue; for Alice Neil, still bewildered by her luck, waited at the street-car gate several minutes before going to the taxi stand. Perhaps it was better, for Tim's memory was already fast slipping. Presently another shabby figure would slouch into the dimly lighted room where Tim drowsed and hand over two hundred and forty dollars, Tim's collected bet. After that there would be a celebration; and touts and tipsters would have the price of food and drink—until to-morrow. Tim was that sort.

Tim's present condition explained why he was on the ground. There was no question of dishonesty. Prosperity had been too much; it had licked him—unhorsed him and added thirty pounds of flesh. Soft living does that; it takes many a leading rider out of the saddle and starts him down the greased chute. And Tim Moore had been a leading rider—the leader—for a year. But the heights were behind him, and obscured. Selling tips, although it is the legitimate work of an excellent handicapper, was quite a distance down the chute. And Tim was still skidding. He weighed a hundred and thirty pounds.

THERE was quite a to-do that night when the Oriole, alias Jim Burgoyne, came around to collect Tim's sales. The Oriole was lean, wizen-faced and not at all a betting man. Hence he was fairly prosperous. The Oriole was the handicapper who toiled each night, mimeographing the Paddock and Stable Selections. And he had come around to get forty-two dollars and fifty cents from Tim Moore.

Peg Daughtry, he who had cashed Tim's winning ticket, darted into the pool room ahead of Tim's employer. Peg's sharp nose was twitching curiously—a certain sign of excitement. He was not so sure Tim had any of his money left; and that, Peg reflected, would be exceedingly disastrous.

"Hi—Tim!" Peg hissed. "Shake out of it. The Oriole's here—right here—now!"

Which was true. The author of Paddock and Stable Selections, one of the track's best sellers, entered briskly, although rather loosely, since his knee action was quite similar to that of some of the shaky platers he had mentioned from time to time. Tim forced one eye open and regarded the pair, inspecting the anxious Peg first, then the Oriole.

"WATCHA want?" he demanded thickly. "Blood money ?"

"I want what's coming to me—no more, no less," his employer retorted. "And I'm going to get it."

"You are now," Tim observed slowly, "if I say so—if I say so." He raised his head wearily from the small, round table which had been serving as a pillow. "Oh, Peg! Thassa good scout—reach—in hip pocket. Count him out—for-fort-forty-two beans—no more—no less."

He regarded the Oriole with disfavor. "Saw'n angel to-day—ol' snoot-nose. Saw'n angel. Gave her Winnow—on the house. Collect—collect that—will you?"

And then he fell asleep. Peg, in wonder, realized that his pal still had more than a hundred dollars. Tim also had a remarkable ability to sleep under difficulties, for the Oriole shook, shouted questions and at last gave up with many and weird oaths. He wanted to know about the free information on Winnow.

"You"—the handicapper glared at Peg Daughtry—"you tell this runt he's fired—canned. I'm off him for life, and that goes. That'll sober him up in the morning."

"Saw'n angel," Tim muttered softly, "—blue-eyed lil angel."

Peg's nose twitched again, this time in sorrow. To him, Tim's job was an achievement, beyond and above the business of plain touting. And Tim had cast his job aside—deliberately. That was why, the next morning, Peg sat up in bed, hugging his bony knees gloomily, while a sobered Tim assured the world he didn't care a hoot about the Oriole and his job.

"I'm hep that you don't care anything about your boss," Peg admitted. "But Tim, how're we going to eat?"

"Thought you had a sucker lined up," Tim replied. "Ain't there a stable horse up this week—for the gang to make their stake on?"

Peg shook his head. "You know it's a good three weeks before the get-away races. It'll be hard sledding the next ten days—everybody out for the jack and the stables as dumb as an oyster. And I've been warned to go light twice in three days."

"Trouble with you touts," Tim observed, sitting up also, "is that you're afraid to use your nerves. Just watch my smoke. I'll cost the Oriole customers this day. Besides," he added, "I've got money yet. You eat as long as I do."

Peg's nose twitched appreciatively. He bounded to the floor and began to dress. Tim followed suit, perhaps a trifle more painfully. He was bending over a perverse shoe lace when a question persisted in his mind until he had to seek relief.

"Say, Peg!" he inquired. "Know Louisville fairly well?"

"What a question!" Peg groaned. "Why—Louisville's my home."

"Know any families—name of Neil?"

"Lots of 'em. Who, for instance?"

"I found a—card—yesterday," Tim said. "One of my women customers dropped it. Her name's Alice Neil."

Peg considered the name thoughtfully, shook his head. "Nope. Can't oblige you. Maybe," he suggested hopefully, "her name's O'Neal. Ain't no Neils in the racing game got a girl by the name of Alice."

"Ring off!" Tim advised in disgust. "This girl don't know *A* in the game. She's a beginner. And, believe me, I'm going to see her again. Got to get an information horse first, too. Something's wrong when a doll like her gets desperate and bucks the pari-mutuels—mighty wrong."

"SOMETHING'S wrong when any swell doll don't have a sap wanting to protect her," Peg observed dryly, ducking Tim's ready fist. "Who you going to see out at the stables—some of the Oriole's stool pigeons?"

"Maybe," Tim considered. "And there's a half dozen clockers who'd slip Tim Moore the low-down—for nothing. But I got a hunch. I'm going to call on Bill Heimer. He's got a public training stable—chuckful of platers—and he needs a win."

"Bill's all right," Peg reflected, "except he forgets how to talk when he's got something entered in a race. You're wasting time."

Tim wasted time. He wasted two full hours lounging around the Heimer stable. And because Bill Heimer was slow-thinking, good-natured and had always liked Tim, he fell to talking over better days for both. Once Heimer had saddled thoroughbreds for a famous stable; but the owner had passed away; and Bill, tolerant and averse to extra work, had drifted with the current, content to live from one year to the next. In a way he was an owner, but his four platers too were growing old. So, to increase his income, Heimer had assumed the rôle of public trainer.

At eleven o'clock Tim was headed for the track exit; beyond the stables. His step was light, and he was whistling—whistling because Bill Heimer had observed that Painter, one of his own horses, would be trying in the sixth race that afternoon. Tim knew that Heimer was truthful, that Painter would run second at least.

"That's my information horse," Tim broke off whistling to exclaim. "I'll sow me some customers to-day."

He lost much of his self-complacency a moment later when he turned to gaze back at the stables. For there, clad in sweater and sport skirt, was a slim, fair-haired girl, talking to Bill Heimer. There wasn't any doubt of her identity. And Bill, for a wonder, had removed his hat, quite forgetful of his bald head.

"LAND of living!" Tim stared until a string of horses, returning from exercise, nearly ran him down. "It's her—Miss Neil."

Tim turned slowly and made for the gate. "All bets are off," he observed thoughtfully, "when a dame—and a green one—blunders into your own special tip. Now I wonder—how'd she get to know Bill Heimer?"

Bill, it seemed, was too busy to explain that afternoon; and likewise, Tim was too busy to inquire. He was inside the track, meeting sundry clients who, in the past, had been listed as steady patrons of the Oriole. It was a fairly prosperous day, one that caused Peg Daughtry's elongated nose to redden from incessant twitching. Peg was working as a sort of scout, spotting prospects who appeared likely to give up five dollars for a few whispered words. And these, after a careful appraisal, he passed on to Tim's more finished methods.

The pair were talking shop near the track fence when a uniformed messenger tapped Tim's shoulder. "Lady wants to see you," he growled, "—up at the paddock terrace."

And thus Tim answered the summons to meet his angel of yesterday.

ALICE NEIL was alone, though, judging from the number of male glances in her direction, she could have been the center of a willing group. There were other girls and women without escorts, some sprinkled among the hundreds along the terrace. But they were quite obviously the type who didn't need an escort. Alice Neil was not; she belonged in the clubhouse just as surely as Tim Moore didn't. The contrast, as Tim stood before her with a flushed face, altogether uncomfortable, justified the scores of curious glances in their direction. But the cool eyes of the girl were unconcerned as she smiled and greeted Tim. Her worried air of yesterday was gone.

"I wanted to buy your selections when I came in," she said. "But I missed you."

"Lady," Tim assured, "you'll miss me at the gate from now out. I've resigned—out on my own hook now."

"I came by—after the race was over—the one Winnow won," she told him. "I bet four dollars."

"Four!" Tim echoed. "Why, that horse was worth shooting on."

"I bet all but a dollar and some odd change," she informed. "I—didn't follow your other selections."

Tim's stare was more than the question he did not ask.

"I—I saw some—other names—I liked better," she explained. "So I thought they would pay better odds. They didn't."

"Lady," Tim assured, "it's them kind of ideas that keeps horse-racing going. And they're about as good as any, unless you're put wise by somebody who knows his stuff. And then it ain't a cinch. There ain't any cinches in this business.

"But you've got my information horse to-day," Tim went on; "play him—straight, place and show."

"Information horse," she repeated; "you're mistaken. I—I wanted to ask you."

"Didn't Bill Heimer tell you—about Painter?"

"I didn't ask him," she replied. "I was talking to him about—other matters."

"Well, Painter's my special," Tim observed. "Goes in the sixth. Let me have your program for a second."

NEVER did a child of the paddock and stables toil harder to select winners than Tim Moore as he pondered over the list of entries. "Don't play these unless you can't decide on something else for yourself—all except Painter—play him."

And then, because there didn't seem anything else to do, Tim took his leave. He promised himself, of course, that he would see her just after the sixth race, providing Painter ran first or second. The other entries he had marked with his pencil had been the ones his judgment chose as the logical winners.

Peg Daughtry was beckoning violently down beside the track fence. "Don't tell me I can't get the dope," he began, rubbing his troublesome nose. "Run into a guy just a minute ago—knows your lady friend. Said she was an army nurse in the war. Folks used to be big bugs in St. Looey—broke now. I was pumping him for you when he spotted her up on the terrace. Said she was on duty at St. Aignan for a year. I went through that camp," he complained, "and blamed if I saw her."

"Maybe she dodged you," Tim observed cheerfully. "I would, if I'd 've seen you first. You must have been a pretty sight—flu and mustard gas, too.

"Peg, she's a queer combination. Wise in some ways but she's a babe in the woods when it comes to our game. From now on we're a committee of two to put her on the right road. Any dope we get is hers—free. Some women use their muscles in a factory—or behind a counter—when they need money real bad. Others use their brain. Miss Neil's after the coin in a hurry, and she's bucking a tough game, believe me. It's that way a heap," he added sagely; "folks always think they can break right in on the cards or the races and clean up."

"What do we get out of it?" Peg demanded. "We ain't no millionaires—nor no charity outfit either."

"No," Tim agreed. "We're two sorry birds, when you put it that way. But that makes no never mind. After the sixth race," he added thoughtfully, "I'm going downtown and buy some clothes—if Painter does come in."

Painter came in, not at very long odds, but well enough. He came in first, a tired selling plater, spurred on to do his best in the last few jumps of a mile-and-furlong affair by the roar of thousands calling upon the first three thoroughbreds, a head apart, to do a little better.

This time it was Tim Moore who searched for Alice Neil; and conditions were reversed; the girl had gone, perhaps ahead of the milling crowd fighting to board ingoing street cars. Tim reasoned that she might have gone earlier so as to reach a bank before closing hour; that was plausible if she had played the selections marked on her program, for four out of six had won. So he gave up and fought his way to a car platform where he sweltered and envied Peg's attenuated form.

TIM'S new clothes were a relief for bored eyes. The suit was of gray and black checks. His cap was plaid, and his shoes tan. Peg regarded this expenditure with mournful eyes; a good many breakfasts and dinners were represented in the collection of bills changing hands. Besides, he reflected, nothing much in the haberdashery line could modify Tim's grossness about the waist line. A daily six dozen was about the proper reducing prescription.

But at least the new clothing gave Tim more confidence, because his business prospered as the week drew to an end. It prospered so well that the Oriole cornered Peg and threatened to have the pair barred from operating within the track enclosure. That promise was an error; the Oriole couldn't have carried it out if he had wished; he was bluffing. The thing that stood out like a sore finger was Tim's unusual success in finding successful tips. Moreover, he had been painfully sober for six days. The latter fact was due to a meeting each afternoon on the paddock terrace when Tim Moore and a girl, whose eyes became brighter and bluer as fortune prevailed, went over the program carefully, entry by entry, and then separated.

ON SATURDAY, after Alice had checked up her winnings and announced that she was four hundred fifteen dollars better off, she sprang a surprise. Tim, in his noisy clothing, still neat as the result of daily visits to a pressing shop, could hardly be blamed for displaying surprise—almost consternation.

"I wish you would dine with me to-night," she invited. "There's so many—things I'd like to talk over. Besides, I want to show my gratitude—even if such a method is slight."

Tim wanted to tell her the honor was ample repayment, that it was more than he had hoped. But he became strangely tongue-tied. His acceptance sounded like that of an abashed schoolboy.

"I'll be on the mezzanine at the Regal," she told him. "I'm stopping there."

It was some time afterward before Tim Moore recalled that Alice had not given the hour. "I'll settle that," he observed; "just stick around until she shows up.

"But what gets me," he wondered, "is what in blazes she's doing at the Regal—as near rock bottom as she was. Tim, my boy, you gotta play smooth and learn what's what. If it's some skate in trousers caused her tough luck—good night, Mister Man!"

He grinned appreciatively. "She's my information girl," he observed, "—my three-X special—the classiest entry that ever set foot in Churchill Downs. And Tim, you crooked half-tout—you've made her! Get that, will you—making an angel!"

Peg voiced the same brand of sentiment shortly afterward. Incredulous at first, he switched to expressions of envy, amazement and criticism concerning Tim's personal appearance and character.

"Talk about blind luck!" he mused. "If it was raining diamonds—and you was asleep—you'd wake up with a basketful in each hand. But what I don't get," he added, "is what a tony dame like that means by being seen in a public place with Tim Moore. She ain't no vamp. Still she's roosting high and mighty when she flops at the Regal. She was one of the best-hearted girls in the A.E.F.—that vet wised me to that. Tim—reckon you're elected to land the information. Maybe she just likes you."

This last was a shrewd thrust, and lost upon Peg's partner. There is a very real fountain of youth within every man—a sort of repressed vanity—the element, by the way, that inspires some to make fools of themselves. Tim brushed his clothes carefully when they reached their room. Peg, anxious to do his bit, gave Tim's tan shoes a million-dollar shine. There was the matter of a stickpin—an elaborate horseshoe affair, which eventually went into the discard at Peg's veto. And as it was well past seven o'clock, Tim phoned for a taxi.

"Boy," Tim announced, as the machine slid up against the curbing and awaited the adventurer, "they'll sit up and notice this kid to-night."

"They'll sit up and notice who's with you," Peg corrected, nose twitching enviously. "Wake me up and give me the bad news."

Alice was waiting on the mezzanine floor, clad in white—not a gown, but a plain street affair. There was no amusement in her eyes as she surveyed the flushed Tim, noted the wonder of his clothing scheme and guessed at the care he had taken in preparation. "I thought we would go to the coffee room," she explained; "it's not near so crowded at this hour."

Tim was relieved—mightily. The ordeal of sitting in the main dining-room had been dreaded. "Anywhere," he agreed generously, following her to the elevator.

THE coffee room was far from empty; it was comfortably full; and many of the occupants were familiar figures down at the track. Tim saw more than one pair of eyes glance at the girl in frank admiration, then rest upon him in amazement. This part of the proceeding he enjoyed. Not for years had he appeared in the places of the great.

Something of the past came back to him, something that made him remember little niceties, something that filled him with vague regrets. And then, before he had realized it, she had managed the ordering and was begging Tim to talk about himself—his methods of obtaining information.

"I'm not going to be a competitor," she added; "but there's so much I have to learn. I'm going to learn everything possible—maybe," she smiled, "some of the impossible. But I'll leave that to you to judge. Isn't it a fact that you got your education in the racing business by sheer contact—experience?"

"Lady," Tim began, and for a half hour he regaled her with the story of nearly everything he had learned, and where, and why, and how. It was not a monologue by any means. Tim had to be egged on and on. But the girl saw to that. And many a wiser man than Tim would have unlocked the secrets of his soul to such an audience. Presently Alice pulled him up, short, to warn him that his food was growing cold. Thereafter it was her turn.

STRANGELY enough, she seemed the one ill at ease in the matter of explanations. "I'm—cut loose for good," she said, gazing beyond Tim rather abstractedly. "Bridges burned and all that."

She paused. "It isn't so strange for a girl—to mix in a game—like this, is it?"

Tim hastily reassured her.

"I came to Louisville after drawing on my savings account—five hundred dollars," she explained. "I had planned staying at the Regal a few days only. But I stayed longer than I had intended—and I lost—well, beyond my means." She smiled whimsically. "That afternoon—when you gave me Winnow—I couldn't pay my bill. And after that, believing in beginner's luck, I plunged. And that's that. You saved me."

"Aw," Tim dissented, flushing. "I saw you was—sort of—desperate."

She nodded. "I was. Tell me, did you ever hear of Jack Harkness?"

Tim was startled. "Colonel Harkness' son? All shot up in France. His dad's stables all shot to hell—er—um—busted up when the Colonel died."

Alice leaned forward. Tim noticed her nervous hands, fingers twisting a napkin. "I am here because of Jack Harkness," she said quietly. "For no other reason at all. He is still in a hospital," she hurried on. "I—I looked after him ever so long. Jack"—she half closed her eyes—"Jack—simply can't live unless something's done. When he went into the service his father was alive—the stock farm was going—and Colonel Harkness' horses were racing in Kentucky and the East.

"When Jack came back his father was dead and the farm had been sold to settle debts. Most of the horses were sold as well. Only a few were left. And they're growing old—haven't been raced for two years, Mr. Heimer told me the other day. They've been on the Heimer place, near Louisville. He's been waiting for Jack to get well and take up his father's work.

"But Jack isn't going to carry on. I don't believe he wants to live very hard. He just leans back in his chair at the hospital and—looks far away. It's been a hard blow. He won't talk to Mr. Heimer at all."

Tim Moore felt dizzy. As Alice had unfolded her story, the chief point of interest to him was that there was another man—a man who amounted to everything. Tim was just some one along the sidelines—some one who might help Alice score in her game. She was going to ask for help in whatever plan she had decided upon. Tim gazed thoughtfully down at his checked raiment. But he was game. "What do you want me to do, lady?"

SHE glanced at him queerly; perhaps she realized much that was passing through his mind; she must have, indeed.

"I'm Alice," she corrected gently, "Alice—Tim. I came to Churchill Downs so that I could learn something about the racing business. I want to bring Jack Harkness' pitiful string of horses out of retirement and win races. And Tim"—there were tears in her eyes now—"I need your help."

"I'm not—much," Tim replied slowly, "—just a booze-hoisting tout who couldn't stand prosperity as a rider. But lady—Miss—Alice—I'll do my best to help you. I'll go down and see Bill Heimer in the morning."

There was little of interest to be said after that. Details were talked over, then Alice arose and it was over. She promised to visit the stable the next afternoon. A good-by at the elevator entrance and she was whisked upward.

PEG DAUGHTRY was awakened by a husky monologue outside his room just before daylight. Being wise of Tim Moore, he switched on the light and filled a pitcher from the wash basin before opening the door. Tim was half asleep, sitting in the hallway, his back against the door.

"Nice way to act, after calling on a lady," Peg sniffed. Then he applied the water. "Go 'way," Tim begged wearily, "go 'way. Angel's shook ol' Tim for a crippled guy—Jack Harkness. Jus' a tout—tha's all—all for ol' Tim."

And Peg got no further information. Tim fell asleep after his partner had lugged him over to the bed. Peg studied the snoring figure thoughtfully. "Thought so," he mused. "All these skirts have axes to grind. Well, Tim, me boy, you learned your lesson."

Tim's lesson was one of the hardest man has to learn. The latent fires of ambition had been stirred. But Alice had blundered, without intent, of course, in her method of handling Tim. She was disappointed when he wasn't at the Heimer stable that afternoon. Bill was evasive about her new ally, but admitted that Tim had called during the morning and had promised to go along with the trainer to bring three of the Harkness thoroughbreds from the farm the coming Sunday.

Tim, at that moment, was a mile away over at Douglas Park, where he and Peg were sitting in the stands of the track, now used as a training course. Tim's eyes were yet swollen; and he surveyed the world gloomily.

"Bill says ain't but one of them Harkness horses worth a hurrah," Peg vouchsafed. "That's a six-year-old gelding—Rupert Dale."

Tim nodded. "Told me so, too. Claiming races are his limit, I guess. Say, Peg! Want to help me cut down my weight—hit the road every morning for five miles?"

Peg stared at his partner, then gazed speculatively at his slim legs. They were longer than Tim's—much longer. "Yep," he decided, "I can make five miles while you're waddling along ten. But why—aiming to get in the saddle again?"

"Nothing else," Tim replied. "Bill Heimer asked the steward about reinstating me, and they're pretty near willing. I did have a clean record—except the hooch."

"Well"—Peg's nose twitched—"you've got a record on the hooch, too. Going to ride for Miss Neil?"

Tim nodded. "If Bill gets one of these Harkness dogs into shape. But we ain't going to promise that much to Miss Neil." He arose, gazed thoughtfully toward the blue hills to the south. "I was a living apology when she was putting out the free feed at the Regal—couldn't keep from spilling excuses. Well, figure I'll get back to where I don't have to apologize to my lady friends. Maybe—I've got some pride left."

"Attaboy!" Peg applauded. "When do we start training?"

"In the morning—before breakfast."

So that explains two figures trotting, but wavering mightily, down a road beyond the city limits Sunday morning. There was little traffic, therefore no curious ones to wonder why a rather short, rotund figure persisted in an effort to run despite his purpled, tortured countenance. Tim lasted more than a mile before he collapsed.

"Whew!" he puffed. "Lungs—full of hayseed."

Peg didn't answer outright. But he agreed with Tim thoroughly. In fact he would have remained on the roadside for an indefinite period if Tim hadn't given the word. "Another half mile—then we'll cut across to the car line."

BILL HEIMER went alone to his farm after the Harkness horses. Tim was too sore. Cushions—the larger the better—were what he craved. But first he breakfasted, on toast and milk, sorely tempted by the double order of ham and eggs Peg stored away. Later Tim wabbled to his room, where he spent hours in a semi-doze.

The next morning the pair made two miles at a fair gait, then walked home. As it was a racing day, Peg and Tim carried on their business at the track, Tim with an eye to avoiding Alice. And he succeeded, too. It was an uphill proposition, long, weary miles in the morning, a system crying out for relief—and more food than Tim dared to assimilate. But on Thursday, Tim weighed one hundred and twenty pounds. His trousers were overlapping at the waist, and a healthier color was dawning in his face. Peg seemed to grow more anemic, although he ate prodigiously. There was one thing Tim's partner did do, however; he nosed into one of the choicest killings ever planned on a Kentucky track the day Mavour was pointed especially for a mile affair against some of the fastest sprinters in the West. The result of that information was a plunge by the pair. And Mavour won at twenty to one.

After that, both Peg and Tim closed their business of selling tips. The morning run had been extended to five miles now, which was bad judgment; it was a trifle too hard on Tim, although it deflated his figure enormously. The heroic method tugged at nerves from every quarter, so that Tim sought surcease in a way that had stood the test of years. He fell back on the hooch—then invaded a restaurant and ate and ate and ate.

Tim was attempting to return to his eating place shortly before midnight when Peg found him. They went home instead. Peg's method brought a curious policeman a block to learn what the racket was about. It happened, however, that this particular officer knew something of the circumstances, so he gave Peg the right of way.

"RECKON I'll have to let Johnny Dodge do the riding. Rupert Dale's getting into form—stable boy took him out for six furlongs this morning. Did it in one-fourteen."

Bill Heimer was speaking—speaking mournfully, as was his manner. Alice Neil, to whom he was speaking, wore a sorrowful air. She knew the easy-going veteran of the stables had given up hope of using Tim Moore.

"But I've got to do something," she protested. "I feel I'm responsible. If I could only see him again! He's—Mr. Heimer—he's staging as big an uphill fight for himself, as I'm facing—for Jack."

Heimer rubbed his cheek thoughtfully. "Tim's got a pardner," he ventured; "Peg Daughtry's his name. Promised me he'd drop over before the first race. Suppose you come on back. I'll get him to talk with you."

But Peg, under coercion on the part of Heimer, was backward about the matter of Tim Moore's fall from grace. Peg was somewhat afraid of Alice; he was far less acquainted with women than even Tim.

"Maybe he'll be all right in a coupla days, lady," he explained. "Tim's kinder under the weather right now. He weighed a hundred and fifteen yesterday. Peaked too."

"I want to see him," she insisted, "to talk with him."

Peg shook his head. His versatile nose began to itch terribly. "He'd run, ma'm, if you came in on him. Tim's doing his darnedest to get down to riding weight. But—" He backed away slightly, forced at last to rub his nose. "I'd not worry. No'm."

Alice, however, wanted to know why Tim was dodging her. So she inquired.

Peg's eyes widened slightly. And all at once he decided to give her his viewpoint.

"Lady—if you was a feller sorter struck on a swell dame—and found out she was somebody else's sweetie, it'd hurt your feelings, wouldn't it? Tim," he added reflectively, "ain't no fool. And you can bet your bottom dollar you won't lay eyes on him till he's respectable-feeling, even if he ain't respectable-looking. Tim intends to be both. If he gets away with it, he'll be in the saddle next week, provided Bill gets one of your hawsses ready."

After that remarkable declaration of Tim's intentions, Peg took his leave. His abruptness kept Alice from saying several things, one of them being that she had moved from the Regal and was staying at a boarding-house not far from the track. But Peg was more concerned about Tim's attempted comeback than either Alice or Heimer imagined. He elaborated upon the meeting with Alice that evening, added details that brought a new light to Tim's eyes. It resulted in a reënforced determination to carry on the training. Heimer was surprised when Tim showed up at daybreak and demanded his turn at the workout. The trainer gave Tim Rupert Dale. It was a sweet run for six furlongs, one that made Heimer smile as he closed his stopwatch case.

RUPERT DALE was entered in a mile handicap Saturday. The thoroughbred's long absence from racing was responsible for a generous handicap; he had to carry only one hundred and two pounds. From

Heimer's point of view that was a blessing; but to Tim Moore, who had set out to ride Rupert Dale, the handicap was something fearful, nightmarish. For Tim seemed to stick at a hundred and ten pounds. Added to his morning runs now, were the workouts that are so highly necessary for a jockey more than two years behind in the matter of riding.

"A pound a day," Tim muttered gloomily; "and it's four days until I ride, Peg, I've got to do better."

They had just weighed at the corner grocery. "And Rupert Dale ain't got a chance to run even third with extra weight," Tim added morosely. "Lord—but I'm tired."

"Go without your meals Friday—and Saturday," Peg suggested. "That'll account for at least three pounds."

"Reckon I'll have to," Tim sighed. "But I'm having dizzy spells now—things get right black once in a while."

THE Oriole hunted up Peg Friday night. The handicapper was worried. "Hear Tim's primed to ride to-morrow—for Heimer. Has the horse got a chance—is Tim really in shape?"

Peg wrinkled his nose. "Tim's going to ride," he admitted. "About the horse—that seems to be up to you more than me. You know the Harkness stock."

"Yes," the Oriole conceded; "but they've been away a long time. Rupert Dale's past six now. I wasn't aiming to mention him in my selections, only—I heard there was a little money going down on him up in Chicago."

"Don't know who'd be sucker enough for that," Peg said truthfully. "Bill Heimer ain't in the habit of throwing his money away. And Harkness is broke—in a hospital."

The Oriole nodded, satisfied. "Guess Bill figures he needs the horse in a race or so. But it's a dandy chance for a killing, that's all."

Peg watched the handicapper depart. "You certainly pull 'em out of the air," Peg mused; "but this time, the Lord helping, the Oriole's out of luck. Tim Moore's just two pounds above his weight. And he'll be exactly one hundred and two at twelve to-morrow. If he just ain't too weak!"

Tim was weak, but he passed through the weighing room beneath the judges' stand at noon, the scales registering one hundred and two pounds. Behind that weight was the story of a reinstated jockey who had not eaten for twenty-four hours, not even drinking any more water than necessary. Tim was congratulated by the stewards and by jockeys who had ridden against him in former days. But there was small glory for the rider who wore the blue and white colors of Jack Harkness—the fighting silks of Colonel Harkness. Tim was a sick youth. It would seem hours before the calling of the fifth race, the one in which he was to ride.

With a couple of apprentice jockeys, Tim sat out on the veranda, gazing at the sea of heads below. He visualized the first race as his own great test—the springing into saddle down at the paddock, the parade to the post, the line-up before the barrier, then the break, for a mile run to the twin steel uprights before the clubhouse. Tim was not so certain he could succeed. That dizziness persisted.

AT THE return from the second race, Hawkins, a veteran rider, approached Tim. "Met Peg downstairs," he said. "Slipped me a note for you."

It was a message from Alice. "Jack has come; he's to sit beside me—in the third free box nearest the clubhouse. And Tim, he is nearer his old self than ever. Mr. Heimer says so. Jack is on crutches yet. But we'll have him walking—and everything—if luck is with us. I'm betting on Rupert Dale—for me—and for you. I'm praying every minute for you and Rupert Dale to come in first."

It was just a disconnected note—typical of the girl who had staked so much on bringing life back to Jack Harkness. Tim recalled the little he had known about Colonel Harkness and his son. The colonel he remembered as an austere personage, of the old school. Jack, he knew as a brisk youth about to take on his father's business.

"Guess the boy don't know nothing else but race horses," Tim reflected. "He must have been in an awful jam when he learned the truth. But what a difference Alice—his girl made! What a dif——" He straightened. "Why, you nut!" he exclaimed. "Tim Moore—she's doing just as much for you as she is Jack Harkness. Glory be! She's made you a chance. Hot dog! Bring on your ol' race."

It came all too soon—inevitably as Tim's ardor began to ebb. It seemed as if it were five minutes between the fourth and fifth race. There came a bugle call, strong and clear, and seven jockeys, lounging on the veranda and inside, arose and plodded down the tiny stairway. Tim went last. He was beginning to grow dizzy again. Tim went down, into a throng which gazed at him curiously and talked in low tones. Bill Heimer was waiting beside Rupert Dale, stroking his chin slowly. The jockey gazed thoughtfully at his mount, at the sturdy flanks and rangy limbs.

"He'll be likely to cut up at the barrier a little," Heimer was saying. "You're fourth from the rail; just rein him in—a foot behind the webbing. He'll stay there. And when it goes up, set your hawss in front as quick as possible. Then keep him there. Don't wait on any pace-setting—set it yourself."

Another bugle and the riders went into the saddle. Rupert Dale was nervous, as ill at ease upon his return to racing as Tim Moore. But he was no more so than Bettina, the crack filly made favorite at the track, or Hagar, the veteran sprinter, with an impost of one hundred and twenty pounds. Bettina broke away from her jockey and ran a half mile, a procedure that caused experienced horsemen to shake their heads. They realized she was wasting energy that would be sorely needed in the coming test.

Tim felt some of his old strength of arm come back as he restrained Rupert Dale on the post parade. But at that he hardly had more than time enough to glance swiftly at a certain box, third from the clubhouse end of the stands. He saw a slim girl, standing; and she was waving a handkerchief. There was a man sitting—and crutches leaned against his chair. The pallor of his face was evident, even in that swift glance.

HORSES and riders strung out around the clubhouse turn. Tim bent forward, urged Rupert Dale into a canter.

"If you ain't as good a horse as Bill Heimer thinks you are," the jockey muttered, "we're in a heck of a mess. She's holding a ticket for me. Get that! A ticket in my boot on Rupert Dale—against two of the best sprinters in Kentucky! And, Tim, you're holding a ticket on a crippled man's life—and his happiness—and your own. Lord! If I was only riding Hagar this day!"

Hagar was the Oriole's information horse. Tim had learned that from other jockeys. It wasn't a long shot—just even money—the same as Bettina. But Tim realized that the Oriole knew his business. The stable was shooting with Hagar—needed the money.

Up the chute the entries cantered, brought up before the starter—seven—five forlorn hopes—five entries with slim chances against Bettina and Hagar. And Hawkins, the leading jockey in Kentucky, was wearing the colors on Hagar.

Rupert Dale plunged through the webbing once, then quieted while Bettina took it into her head to become fractious. For this Tim was grateful. The longer the post delay in warm weather, the better it is for older horses. Rupert Dale edged slowly up to the tape. Tim, noting the starter's nod to his assistants, bent forward just as the webbing shot upward.

He guided, kicked, urged Rupert Dale into place, second from the rail. But he did this at a cost; for, as he chose a narrow opening between two wavering thoroughbreds, something struck his right ankle sharply—a blow so heavy that it very nearly threw Rupert Dale off his stride. Tim winced, closed his eyes momentarily, but never looked back to see what horse it was. He was entirely too busy at his task of overtaking Bettina, the early pacemaker. And in that he had enough to do for the next thirty seconds.

HAGAR was thundering at Rupert Dale's flanks. Tim identified the great black horse with a glance beneath his elbow. They were far ahead of the field, those three, Bettina, Rupert Dale and Hagar. And try as he might, Tim could not overtake the flying filly.

The pain in his ankle became more intense—shooting—growing. And with it came that persistent dizziness of the last few days. Ahead the track turned, loomed, not at all directly ahead either, for either Tim was reeling, or Rupert Dale was not running steadily. With an effort Tim crouched forward, realizing that it was he who was reeling. Somehow, Bettina was dropping back; her rider was going for his whip. And at the sight Tim's heart leaped faster. Inch by inch he worked his hands up the lines as they shot into the turn.

"We've got her," he muttered grimly, "got her!"

That was the groan from thousands nearly a half mile away. It was evident that both Rupert Dale and Hagar would pass the filly before they straightened out for the final, desperate quarter-of-a-mile stretch. And dimly, above the pounding of hoofs, both Tim Moore and Hawkins, on Hagar, heard the swelling appeal of the stands. They were calling upon Hagar now—Hagar, second choice in the betting.

But Tim knew there were two in the stands praying for him and Rupert Dale—a slim blue-eyed girl and a man with crutches. And along the fence would be two more—Bill Heimer, slowly rubbing his chin, and Peg Daughtry, nose twitching as he gripped the rail, voice drowned in the uproar, but nevertheless calling: "Easy, Tim—come on, Tim—come on, Tim!"

As THEY flashed by the tiring Bettina, Tim foresaw the heart-breaking duel between him and Hawkins down the stretch. Hagar was hanging on, stride for stride, just beginning his move to pass Rupert Dale.

"The whip," Tim muttered between set teeth, "—gotta give him the whip."

And he did, not once, but a steady rain—a tattoo, feeling rather than seeing the steady advance of Hagar, even now with the jockey's saddle.

Tim's world was growing dark; the stands were revolving—vanishing entirely now and then. And the ankle seemed to be doubling in size. But Rupert Dale was leaping forward, not slackening, still a bare nose ahead.

The steel uprights, along which the placing stewards were already sighting, appeared to stand still twenty yards distant. Then they disappeared. Tim felt his arm going—whipping Rupert Dale—he heard Hagar—heard great convulsive gasps—heard above all that screaming appeal of thousands, mad at the sight of such a finish.

And all at once Tim felt himself slipping. He grasped at the lines. They were gone. There wasn't any Rupert Dale—just a black void into which he was dropping—falling.

"You may come in now," the white-gowned surgeon told a little group outside the hospital-room door. "He's just recovered consciousness."

Tim heard that. At first he wondered; then he grinned. Of course he was dreaming. But his bed was strangely white. So was everything else in the room—white—white. "Well," he murmured drowsily, "if I'm dead, I'm in a nice place, anyway."

But if he were dreaming, why was Alice Neil wasting a kiss upon him—full on the lips, too? It seemed very real. And there was Peg's educated nose—and Bill Heimer and a serious-faced young fellow hobbling in on crutches—a face somehow strangely familiar.

Tim came back to a world of realities. He surveyed his callers thoughtfully. "You're—wasting time," he said jerkily, plucking at the sheet. "I'd have won if some bonehead hadn't bumped into me and busted my ankle. It made me sick. That's why I fell off."

"Never mind," Alice consoled. There were tears in her eyes. "We're going to form a close combination—Jack—and Mr. Heimer—and you. He—Jack——"

"I never saw such a finish!" Jack Harkness put in. And the light in his face was good to see. "I remember you well now. You rode for my father—some."

Tim nodded. "My ankle——"

"The doctor told us it would be well in three weeks," Alice said. "And then you can ride for us—for the Harkness stables."

"But I failed," Tim expostulated wearily; "I couldn't stick in the saddle."

"Rats!" Peg Daughtry thrust his sharp nose forward. "Know where you hit the track?"

"In front of the judges, of course."

"You did—not," Peg retorted. "You fell off a good five lengths after you passed the finish line—first."

"The Fourth Big Brother," by Sam Carson—another racetrack story full of human interest—will appear in March Everybody's, on sale February 15.

Michael Arlen Appears Again

The Dancer of Paris

A Romance—Laid in a City of Romance—in Which the Girl Anson Loves Does Two Startling Things

By Michael Arlen

Author of "The Broken Nose"

Illustration by Stockton Mulford

WHEREAS all capital cities have many points in common, such as noise, news, the underworld, ragtime, Mary Pickford, cocaine, coughs and night life, Paris contains every one of these in marvelous abundance yet colors them all with the glamoured caress of her own illusions. Every one agrees about that, especially women. It is Paris, the city of straight streets, shining squares, queer murders, mad taxis and unshaven police. It is Paris, wherein you may meet men grouped together whom in any other city you would not ever see within miles of the same Y. M. C. A. smoking-concert. All are here, crooks and crusaders, dagoes and deadheads, princes, poets and Americans.

And in Paris you may see many beautiful young women from England and the Americas, and you may see the ghosts of many beautiful young women from England and the Americas, and you may hear tell of them thus and thus, the way they lived with laughing eyes and swift feet, the way they died within the tremor of an eyelash, which is a way women have. But not of death this tale, but of life, telling of Consuelo the dancer: for who in this world was ever more vividly, more magnificently alive than that golden lady, she who was called the Dancer of Paris? A notable compliment, you understand, in a city that has as many dancers as there were jewels in the caskets of the Queen of Sheba, or so they say.

Now of Consuelo Cox it was said that she was a hundred per cent American, that she was a credit to America and an ornament to France, that she was as lovely a girl as you could wish to see anywhere, that she had pep, that she was so rich that her bank-manager stood at attention when speaking to her, that she wore her clothes so that Frenchwomen looked like Englishwomen beside her, that she had the finest collection of chinchilla coats of any woman outside of Los Angeles, that her ankles were so slim that she appeared to have no visible means of support, that her telegraphic address was *per ardua ad astrakhan*, that men were as minutes in her life, and that she danced as no one had ever danced before.

And so she danced, the Dancer of Paris with the enchanted feet, every night at the Salle Mandragora, which is in the Rue Caumartin, a street much in favor among those who are inured to the pursuit of pleasure.

A girl of quality was Consuelo, lithe and fleet and laughing: a girl like a tall flower in a wind that respects the poise of a tall flower, for what is life but a wind, and did mortal eye ever see shaken the poise of that girl! A golden girl she was, to be sure, as slim as a fairy; and of her enchanted feet a great poet has written that they were as the gold-dust that lies on the floors of the dungeons of gaiety.

And so, classically, romantically, with hair like the mimosa in an Italian garden, which is yellow sprinkled with fresh gold, she danced at the Salle Mandragora, with honor and without very much reproach: for was there ever an age or a country in which beauty could not break promises the more lavishly because of the lances that were broken in quest of it?

"But, say, that girl is hard!" some of her countrymen said. "She's as hard as a diamond!"

"And what, dear Heaven, do men know of women!" would cry Consuelo with extraordinary contempt, and her voice would float and flutter round a room like a bird with silver wings, for it was the voice that belonged to the enchanted feet, the voice of a syncopating dancer, with a cry and a lilt and a wave and a laugh in it.

Consuelo! Oh, Consuelo!

NOW it came to pass, as things will, that Noël Anson, a young Englishman who had spent his time since the war in acquiring an international reputation for buying horses that only won races when he had sold them again for next to nothing—that young Anson, in his wanderings about Paris, one day came upon what he called a very superior flash of charity that had lit a very dark hole back of Mont-Parnasse.

"An almost blind artist, by Gad, with an incredibly lavish quantity of kids in septic circumstances," young Anson described the very dark hole. And in due time, when he had traced the flash that had lit it back to Consuelo Cox, he, a notably fearless young man in war and peace, straightway put the facts of the matter before her in some such way as this:

"By Gad, Consuelo, you're a good girl, upon my word! That's exactly what you are, child, and I don't mind saying it to your face——"

"You'd better not say it behind my back, Noël Anson, else you'll ruin my reputation!"

But young Anson muttered doggedly on, in a manly way:

"By Gad, you're a good girl, Consuelo!"

"Oh, shucks!" cried the golden American. But when Noël Anson looked into her eyes, which were as violet as the sea in a southern sunset, he saw with wonder that the depths of her eyes were marvelous with the childish things that are called tears.

And she laughed at him with tight, mocking lips, in a way she had:

"And why, Noël Anson, and why shouldn't I be good, if I feel that way? Surely, boy, being good's an indoor sport like another, and haven't I contracted with the higher authorities for to try them all, *sans blague et sans peur?*"

"Then marry me, Consuelo!" cried the boy, with flushed face, eager eyes.

"Say, Noël Anson, is this a weekly habit of yours, proposing matrimonial entanglements to poor homeless American girls who are so blinded by the elegant cut of your clothes that they might accept you?"

"Consuelo, my God, look here!"

"The two don't go together, boy. Now don't go exciting yourself! I'm not going to accept you."

"I wish you would," sulkily muttered young Anson, he who never made a bet and won and never lost without a laugh—except now, when he was not laughing at all.

And suddenly he took her wrist—they were driving in the Bois, in Consuelo's car—and he looked at her desperately with eyes that tried not to plead overmuch, for it is not manly to seem to plead overmuch.

"Consuelo Cox, will you marry me?"

"I will not, Noël Anson. And if that isn't the seventh time you've asked me that same question, and with no verbal dexterity or lingual versatility whatsoever! And in broad daylight, too! Run, Noël boy, run! Else I might go for to accept you, and how much would your old dad back home like that, and he with a crutch in one hand and a packet of Grape Nuts in the other and a coronet on his head, just where the hard and soft tennis-courts join, all ready to die and leave his son an adequate barony?"

And she laughed at him with tight, mocking lips, in a way she had which made some men say that they would rather be miserable with Consuelo Cox than happy with any one else: but then, to be sure, some men will say anything.

"You're in love with some ghastly man—by Gad, that's what it is!" muttered Noël Anson.

"Say, can I have my wrist back when you're through with same?" asked Consuelo very politely.

"Grudges me even her wrist!" he muttered, but held on grimly enough. "You *are* in love with some one else, aren't you, Consuelo?"

And there was silence awhile in the swift car, a silence of violet eyes that stared bemused into the passing sunlit grasses of the Bois, a silence of grim, blue, boyish-hungry eyes.

"Go on, tell a chap, Consuelo! I'd like to congratulate him. By Gad, I would!"

And the violet eyes, so large and thoughtful, spilled themselves over his brooding face.

"You're a good boy, Noël Anson. No, I am not in love—not with any one, not with any one! Hear me, boy? I am not in love. Those are my exact words, Noël Anson. I have been—once. But not again, not on your life—no, sir!" And she could make a sudden laugh flood her eyes like sunlight in a crypt, for the confusion of men, and young men in particular. But, even so, young Anson later swore to the fact that the depths of her eyes were marvelous with the childish things that are called tears.

"By Gad!" said young Anson, never a young man with a large vocabulary. "It was saying that she was a good girl about that poor artist in septic circumstances that did it! Don't tell me!"

"*I'm* not telling you anything!" muttered Roy Martel with a rather grim smile; for it was to Roy Martel that these things were being confided by his young friend on the very night after their passage.

"It's a way that girls have," said Roy Martel, "of attracting men. At least we will call them men, though I believe there are more technical denominations for them of a length not exceeding one syllable, such as mug, mutt, loon, boob or guy."

"Fathead," said young Anson.

"That's of two syllables, Noël."

"And I've got an option on the second one for this bit of backchat," snarled the young man. He was annoyed. He had wanted sympathy and had got sense.

TALL and lean and dark was Roy Martel—or, to be as exact as he was in all things, was Sir Roy Martel, Bart., Financial Adviser to the British Embassy in Paris. An austere face, not young, not old, a face like a knife: and black eyes that were set in deep black shadows, so that passing strangers would look twice at the tall lean man as he strode from the Embassy to his flat as indifferently as though he were walking in a wilderness, and they would wonder if he were very tired, and they would decide that his were eyes that suffered from silence. But whether or not Sir Roy Martel ever suffered from anything no one might discover, for he was a quiet man with a cold look, and he never confided.

They said, at the Embassy, that he worked hard, too hard. They said he had a mathematical brain as brittle-bright as a searchlight. Noël Anson, who whiled away his spare time as an attaché at the Embassy, was of opinion that Roy Martel's brain was like Clapham Junction, going this way and that without confusion and always, by Gad, getting somewhere! And it was to Roy Martel, long and lean and sardonic, of whom it was said that nothing bored him more than women except men, that the young man was confiding the burden of his love for Consuelo Cox. Not, you would have said, a sympathetic confidant, Sir Roy: but Noël Anson was a young man better versed in the merry practises of friendship than of love: and he liked, for once in a way, to talk to a brain.

"And so," murmured the brain, "you have actually proposed marriage to—that?" And he waved a thin white hand, a fencer's hand, toward the ceiling of his dim candle-lit library—for it was in the immense apartment above his that the Dancer of Paris had, a few weeks before, come to live and laugh and dance. Candlelight was always favored by Roy Martel, as it frequently is by those who work with their eyes in the night.

Noël Anson, as fair as his older friend was dark, flushed.

"Why do you put it like that? You don't even know her!"

"I know every one," smiled the dark eyes from the flickering shadows of the candlelight. "And if you remember, Noël, I was sent to New York on the Loan Mission in 1915."

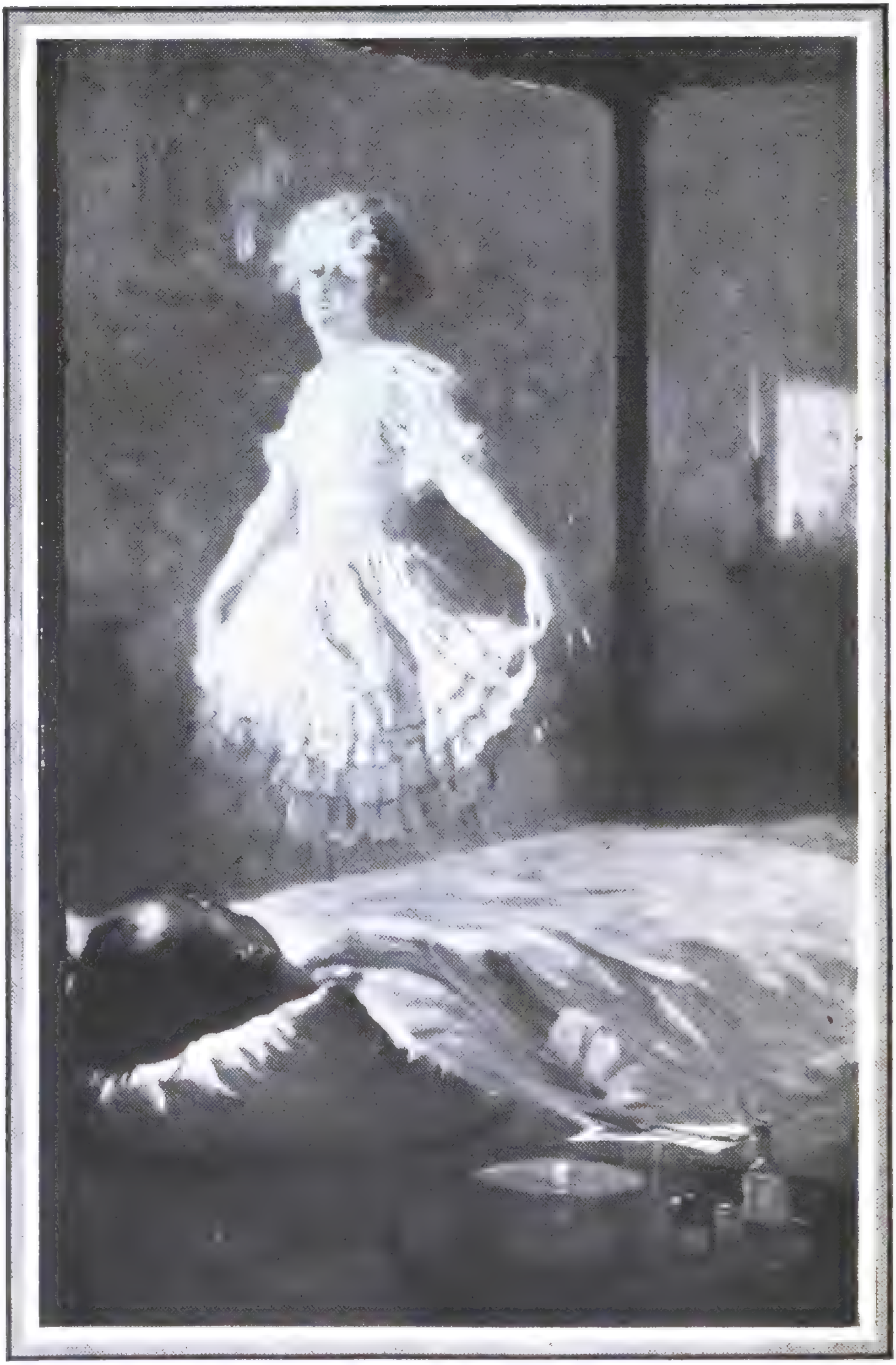
"You met her there!"

"Slightly," said Sir Roy Martel. "Slightly."

"Well, if it's only slightly——"

"And slightly," said Roy Martel, "was quite enough. Not that she isn't charming."

"You're prejudiced!" cried the young man. "That's what you are, Roy—prej-



In his dream he heard his own voice. "And so," said the Roy Martel of his dream, "you've come." But she only smiled, a very little smile.

udiced! It's a rotten way of killing time, that—being prejudiced."

"Perhaps I am. She makes too much noise, that charming Miss Cox. Listen to that."

And down into the dim night-silence of Roy Martel's library, down from the ceiling to their chairs, lashed the shrill music of a saxophone band.

"She's got a party," said Noël Anson, and looked miserable.

"She has one every night—anyway, she has had one every night since she took that flat." Roy Martel spoke without expression, in an uncomfortable way he had. "I think she collects every wastrel in the Salle Mandragora and brings them back. As though she hadn't enough of dancing!"

"Did she dance when you knew her in New York, Roy?"

"All girls dance," said Roy Martel.

"Yes, but try not to be an ass! Professionally, I mean?"

"I forget."

"Good God, what a man!"

"Listen to that!" A tired hand waved to the ceiling, whence came a noise as of a battalion of crows in harmony, a noise that sobbed and droned and yelled and wailed.

But it was a noise very near Noël Anson's heart.

"She never asks me to her parties nowadays," said he miserably. "She's trying to cure me of my infatuation, she says."

"I suppose, then," said Sir Roy Martel, "that she is in love with some one else?"

Then up rose young Anson, like an avenging cherub.

"That's just where you brainy men are wrong, Roy! You're always wrong about human people—by Gad, you are! You simply don't *know*, old boy! She swore to me that she wasn't in love with any one. She said she'd only been in love once in her life, and——"

"And it's time for bed," said Roy Martel. "Off with you, boy! I'm so busy these days trying to find some light in this Reparations mess that I need all the sleep I can get."

As young Anson went, muttering against the incivility of his host, which he described as lavish and lethal, all the clocks of Paris began the lengthy business of making it midnight. But Roy Martel, who so needed sleep to rest a brain that was a battlefield of figures, did not go to bed, for he knew it would be no use. Slowly, slowly, he paced about his dim, wide rooms, the rooms of a man who liked fine, simple things, shining old woods, ancient golds and somber carpets that stole away the noise of footfalls.

THE narrow hours struck, and still he paced, a gaunt shadow among dancing specters, for the draft though open windows and doors played furiously with the little candle-flames. And from above, from the flat of the golden American, ever and again came the rustling whisper of sliding feet, ever and again came the shrill wail of the shining thing called a saxophone, and the beating of the drum, and the song of the violin, and the bass viol too. And the saxophone played, it played and played. "Oh, God, oh, God!" muttered Roy Martel, for he longed for the silence that would wrap him in sleep.

But silence did not come; and his tired brain grew livid with the noise of folly that sobbed and droned and yelled and wailed; and then, like lightning against a tortured sky, flashed a voice, a voice that waved and laughed, syncopating, syncopating.

A voice among voices:

"Dance, you all! Why don't you dance? What is there but dancing—to dance and dance, and then to die? Oh, you weak-kneed mutts, don't you *know!* There's dancing—and then the Deluge! After dancing—the Deluge! And so we dance!"

And so they danced, on the shining parquet of Consuelo's white-paneled salon. Frenchmen, Americans, English and the dark et ceteras that collect like smuts on all great cities—they danced. And Consuelo danced. And the saxophone played. And Consuelo, hair like a golden halo round an ivory face, eyes shot with violet laughter, Consuelo sang, and as she sang her lithe body throbbed with grace.

She sang with arms outstretched, long white arms that swayed like white snakes, and she sang to the young man who had the shining saxophone throbbing between his lips.

And suddenly the voice of the swaying white arms was still, as though cut by a knife, and the white arms fluttered irresolute, and the saxophone gave a silly wail and wailed no more.

In the doorway, as on the threshold of carnival whose name to him was boredom, stood a tall, dark, lean figure, with deep shadows round his eyes. He stood there as alone as a cypress in a garden. And he looked straightly at the queen of the garden, who stood alone on the shining parquet, as alone as a queen: and into her poise and look suddenly crept something of the calm dignity which poets have found in queens of olden time, so that her motley guests wondered at this Consuelo of grave demeanor and imperious carriage; and they stared curiously at the tall man in the doorway, and they recognized the red mark on the black silk lapel of his dinner-coat for the rosette of the Legion of Honor of the First Class, than which none is greater among the great distinctions of the world.

And he stood there, without a smile, as alone as a cypress in a garden, and he said:

"I hope," he said, "that you will pardon my intrusion."

"I hope so too," said Consuelo gravely. And a fool somewhere laughed.

"You see," explained the tall man, and he spoke as if he and the golden American were quite alone, and he spoke low, as though the sweep of parquet that lay between them was no more than the length of a cigarette. "You see," he said, "ever since you honored the flat above mine with your presence, some weeks ago, your activities have been such that I have been quite unable to get any sleep. And I thought, Miss Cox, that I would just come upstairs and mention that to you."

And the fool somewhere laughed.

"*Quel dommage!*" whispered a French voice.

"Say," cried the fool, "that's some gall! Who the hell are you, anyway?"

Consuelo swept a very white arm round the room.

"People," she cried softly, softly, "allow me to introduce you to Sir Roy Martel."

The man in the doorway bowed like an absent-minded courrier.

"Pleased to have you meet us!" chuckled the fool, but the man in the doorway did not even glance at him.

Spoke Consuelo, very gravely:

"I am so sorry, Sir Roy, to be disturbing your rest. Of course I had not the faintest idea when I came here that you lived in the apartment below me. I assure you that I am sincerely sorry, Sir Roy. But now that I *am* here, what can I do?" And it was a helpless gesture that she made, but very swiftly the arm of Roy Martel pointed to the saxophone player.

"Need your young friend exercise his ghastly talent quite so relentlessly?"

And the frozen silence was ended by a protesting babel:

"Oh, say, the saxophone! We *must* have the saxophone! Why, the man's mad! Who ever heard of dancing without a saxophone?"

"I am afraid, Sir Roy," said Consuelo, without a smile, "that your suggestion does not seem to meet with quite unanimous approval, and I must consider my guests——"

"I was not asking for approval!" said the tall man harshly. "I was asking for mercy."

"Mercy!" echoed Consuelo.

And the fool somewhere laughed.

"Mercy!" echoed Consuelo, and her voice was as cold as a voice from a cellar, and her very white arms flashed up like a white torch, and she cried to the saxophone player:

"Play, you boy, play!"

And the saxophone played like a silly automaton.

Cried Sir Roy Martel, smiling curiously:

"So that is mercy, Miss Cox!"

"That is justice, Sir Roy!"

He looked at her, smiling curiously, and he went, as suddenly as he had come.

THE very next night there happened a memorable happening at the Salle Mandragora. The dancer danced, she stood, she fell.

The Salle Mandragora is a restaurant of many tables, richly lit, and in the center is a space of marble whereon all dance, except from ten-fifteen to ten-thirty every night, when dances only Consuelo Cox.

But that night as she danced, very golden hair and little white face, a green dress of the crinoline mode that swept widely to the floor, swaying arms and enchanted feet in shoes of crimson with a gold device—as she danced her hand was suddenly seen to press her heart, and she stood frightfully still, and then the golden hair was spilled upon the marble floor.

A press was quickly around the fallen dancer, startled waiters, *maîtres d'hôtel* and friends. Very many friends had Consuelo the dancer—very many friends of her face and body.

They parted before a voice that said harshly:

"If you will allow me——"

And they allowed him, and he of the voice lifted the still, slim dancer and carried her toward what a *maître d'hôtel* indicated was her retiring room. But, even as she was being carried, the eyes of the white face opened and stared, in the enchantment of weakness, at the face that carried her. There were very deep shadows about the eyes of that face.

"Why, Roy!" she whispered. "Fancy you being here!"

"I came," he said grimly, "to see you dance—and I thought I saw you die, Consuelo!"

And suddenly the mouth of the dancer laughed.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she laughed. "And how sorry you'd have been, wouldn't you, Sir Roy, kind Sir Roy!"

He was quite silent, and she cried wickedly:

"Put me down now, please. I am quite all right now. Thank you so much for being so—kind to me. Thank you, thank you!" To the *directeur*, who was fluttering by them: "Monsieur Briant, I will continue the dance. Tell the orchestra."

"*Mais, mademoiselle*——"

"*Must* you always argue, Monsieur Briant? I have told you—I will continue the dance!"

"But, Miss Cox, you are too brave!" protested the kind little man. "You look so white, you ought to go to bed. The gentleman your friend is, I am sure, only too eager to see you home——"

"Oh, is he!" cried Consuelo with a peculiar laugh; and little Monsieur Briant was very surprised to find that the "gentlemen her friend" was not, that he had vanished. . . .

And Consuelo continued her dance and was acclaimed for many minutes. But the very next day her doctor, a determined sort of man, told her that she must not dance again for a little time, she must rest. He was very definite about it.

"Your heart," said he, "is not very strong, Miss Cox."

"Oh, well, have it your own way!" sighed Consuelo as if she did not care very much.

NOW when Noël Anson called at his friend's flat a week later, a Noël Anson with a rather anxious face, for there had come to the Embassy an urgent telephone message requiring his presence, he asked swiftly at the door:

"What's up, Mason? We heard at the Embassy three days ago that he was 'slightly indisposed.'"

"Double pneumonia," said Mason briefly.

"Good God, the man says it as though it was a double whisky!"

"Little more whisky and a little less work would have done Sir Roy no 'arm," muttered Mason. "If I may say so, sir——"

"Say on, Mason."

"He caught a chill, sir, walking up and down these rooms all night and getting 'ot and opening all the windows to shoot drafts into him as they might be bullets." Mason hated drafts. "And then, sir, this pneumonia came on sharp yesterday. Doctor's in there now. Dr. David."

"Ah, that's good!" murmured young Anson, for the great bearded figure of Dr. David was one of the most respected figures in Paris, fine physician and charming gentleman.

"About all that is good, sir," said Mason. "Sir Roy won't have a nuss, and——"

"But, by Gad, man, he must have a nurse! He must be made to have a nurse! You can't have double pneumonia without a nurse, Mason! Why, it's—it's—well, it's silly!"

"'E simply refuses, sir. Went mad when we got a nuss to him last night. Nice girl, too, sir. Scotch. But Sir Roy, 'e went mad, delirium and all, jumping out of bed and swearing terrible that he'd 'ave no women messing about his bed, not nusses nor angels—with one exception, sir. 'E keeps on making that exception."

"One exception, Mason!" Noël Anson wondered immensely.

"Well, sir, this is private, if you understand me, sir——"

"Of course I understand you, man! I could pass an examination on what you haven't told me."

"Well, sir, seeing that you're Sir Roy's good friend——"

"Oh, get on, man! If he's really dangerously ill we must get hold of this exception at once."

"Dangerously ill he is, right enough, sir. Doctor says 'e's as good as got brain-fever on top of it."

"Couldn't happen to *me*!" muttered young Anson.

"And Sir Roy, sir, 'e keeps on asking for that young dancing lady upstairs to come and——"

"Look here!" cried Noël Anson. "One of us is mad. Which? Do you seriously mean to stand there at attention and tell me that Sir Roy wants Miss Cox to come and nurse him?"

"Not to nuss him, sir—to dance to 'im," muttered Mason sulkily, yet with a note as of apology for his master, Sir Roy Martel.

Noël Anson whistled a thoughtful note between set teeth.

"And I thought he hated her!" he murmured.

"They was engaged to be married once," said Mason thoughtfully. "Anyhow, I *understood* they was engaged. In New York."

"Oh!" said young Anson. "Engaged! And then what?"

"Sir Roy, sir, 'e broke it off. So I *believe*."

"Oh, did he!" said Noël Anson. "There's a lot of oh's and ah's in this business, Mason."

"And Sir Roy and I, sir, we never heard nothing of 'er again until she suddenly comes and lives right atop of us here, all covered with friends and jewels, if I may say so, sir. Lady she was originally, too. I think it upset Sir Roy considerable, coming against her again."

Young Anson frowned thoughtfully. Thinking always made him frown, like medicine.

Mason added, almost nervously:

"Sir Roy, sir, I'm sure 'e would be very grateful if you'd come and take up your quarters here until the crisis is——"

"Say no more, Mason," said the young man, absently.

WISE men say that there are laws governing all things, whether it be poker or pneumonia, but, because there must be a "catch" in everything they add that we very seldom know what those laws are. Of pneumonia we know that there is a crisis that may come after days, and that if the patient is alive on the morning of the eighth he will assuredly—anyway, the chances are that he will—stay alive to die another day.

In the case of Sir Roy Martel it looked, from day to day, as if he would not survive the crisis. He breathed with increasing difficulty. And he seemed to care so little whether he breathed at all. He lay as though racked by a tremendous, dark indifference—except every now and then, when there was a flash.

"The thing," said Dr. David gravely, "has caught him in a wretched state due to overwork. Body tired, mind dead tired."

Mason grunted. He had no sympathy with all this working. And drafts. Mason, these days, had a fatal air of "I told you so" all over him.

The two men, under Dr. David's direction, took turns in the sick-room: Mason in the morning, while Noël Anson read the newspapers in his room at the Embassy, a room especially fitted-up for that purpose with chairs, desks, telephones and Blue Books: and Noël Anson in the afternoon, while Mason was "putting things straight," a leisurely pursuit also intimately connected with newspapers. When Mason was not "putting things straight" he was generally to be found indulging a grim passion for polishing brown shoes. "Sir Roy," he told Noël Anson, "is very partial to a *deep* shine." Noël grunted.

The sick man spoke very little. He insisted on neither of his two "nusses" sitting up at night with him. Noël begged him not to be an ass, when he at once lost his temper, his haggard, saturnine face trembled with wrath, and so they had to soothe him.

"Mason can make up bed in next room," he just managed to say at last. "Leave door open. Call him when I want him."

But it was young Anson who took the bed in the little room next his friend's. Mason was inclined to be rather annoyed about that, but said nothing. Mason had spent a long life in being rather annoyed about things but saying nothing, and it told on his nerves.

On the third night, as he was "putting things straight" in the sick-room, suddenly said Roy Martel:

"Leave the door open."

Mason opened the bedroom door and, with a resigned look, left it open.

"Not that door, you fool!"—a harsh whisper.

"Why, there ain't another, sir!" pleaded Mason.

"Hall door, man—for God's sake. Leave it open—all night."

Mason consulted with Mr. Anson.

"Of course," said Mr. Anson thoughtfully. "Naturally you must leave the hall door open all night, Mason. It's always done in cases of double pneumonia."

"Both balmy," thought Mason.

Five days passed, silent days, feverish nights, tortured by a very sick man's fight for breath.

Delirium had at last left the thin thing which had once been the arrogant Roy Martel. He scarcely spoke, he wanted nothing. Roy Martel was what is called "a good invalid": he did not sigh, complain, fret; and when he forced words between those harsh, tortured breaths, he only said:

"I want Consuelo—to come and—dance—please, boy!"

"Certainly," murmured Noël Anson. Roy saying "please," like that!

"Why doesn't—Consuelo come?" whispered the sick man.

"You mustn't talk so much, old Roy! Good Lord, any one would think you'd only got extremely single pneumonia by the way you chatter on and on!"

"Boy, why doesn't—she come?"

Noël Anson found he could not look at the haggard face with the burning eyes. He set to arranging the blankets very thoughtfully. There is a great deal in arranging blankets over a sick man, and Noël Anson made a great deal of it.

"SHE'S away in Provence," he said, not looking at the sick man's face. "I've sent her a wire at prodigious expense, saying you want her to come and see you. She ought to be here any moment now."

"Good—good!" And what was left of Roy Martel's fine face tried to smile. "Do you know," he whispered, "that Consuelo—dances like an ivory thing—in a world of—white velvet?"

"I've always said as much!" grinned young Anson. Anyhow, he tried to grin.

A thin shaking hand suddenly touched his wrist.

"She will—come, won't she?" pleaded—dear Heaven—*pleaded* Roy Martel!

"You bet your life, old man. Now don't talk any more, there's a good Roy."

And then Noël Anson sat for a long time very still in the large armchair by the window, and he tried not to listen to the tortured breathing of his friend, and he wondered what more he could do. He had done all he could, surely! Four times in four days he had gone upstairs to see Consuelo Cox, and four times she had refused to see him. The answers of the maid, an unsympathetic maid, had been:

"Miss Cox is not at home, sir."

"Miss Cox exceedingly regrets the illness of Sir Roy Martel, sir, but is afraid she cannot see you to-day, as she is resting."

"Miss Cox is not at home, sir."

"Miss Cox is not——"

"Oh, hell!" he had said that fourth time, and stamped downstairs.

And he had sent notes upstairs, several notes, saying in various ways, not too dramatically, that Roy Martel was very ill and would like very much to see her.

"He keeps on asking for you," he wrote in one note, "and he seems to want to see you dancing! He's almost got brain-fever as well as pneumonia, you see. You might be a sport and do something about it, Consuelo. If you would just come down and dance a step or two for him and smile at him for a moment or two—couldn't you? The doctor says it might make a difference—please, Consuelo!"

He had bitten his lips in penning that letter. He had wanted to put that it was almost a life-and-death matter. "But it's a begging enough letter as it is!" he had thought. "How old Roy would hate it if he knew—*how* he'd hate it!"

But, even so, she did not come. And only one answer did she send to his several notes, saying:

> I am so sorry, Noël, that your friend has pneumonia. I once had pneumonia, too, and it is certainly very wearing. I do hope he will be better soon. I am not doing any dancing at the moment, having been told to rest. You will have noticed that there are no more parties in my apartment, and I'm sure your friend is very glad of that! He has all my sympathy—but I am sure, *quite sure*, that he will get better, for Sir Roy Martel was not made to die of pneumonia.
>
> Yours ever,
> CONSUELO COX.

And young Anson, with that letter, a very fine parchment of the Rue de la Paix, screwed between his fingers, had passed sentence of outlawry on Consuelo the dancer, whom he had loved. And he had remembered against her the words of older men, how they had said that the American was hard, "as hard as a diamond." And he had thought: "By Gad, she is! Just because old Roy once turned her down! Good Lord—women!" And he thought of the words of the great poet who had made a poem about the golden dancer's enchanted feet: "They are the gold-dust that lies on the floors of the dungeons of gaiety. . . ."

"He'll die, he'll die!" thought young Anson, with the tortured breathing of his friend in his ears. And he made a great discovery—that he simply could not bear Roy Martel to die, because he loved Roy Martel as an elder brother. It is a curious thing, that brother love between men unrelated by blood, a furtive thing, very furtive, but very potent.

And he spent much time hating Consuelo Cox, her whom he had loved.

ON THE seventh morning, the grave, bearded face of Dr. David seemed to bear out the young man's most fearful thoughts.

"Dying right under a man's nose!" he thought. "Good Lord!"

Said Dr. David, into his beard:

"Weak, weak. Makes no effort, you understand."

Said Dr. David:

"104. Hum. 104. Pity. . . ."

And, directing them to do thus and thus and saying he would soon return, he left the three men, the three silent men.

Mason wandered about with a fatal air, "putting things straight."

"Overworking like that!" muttered Mason.

"Weakening hisself!" muttered Mason. "*And* drafts!"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Noël Anson.

Since that fifth day, when he had spoken with a flash of the ivory thing that danced in a world of white velvet, Roy Martel had not spoken the name of the dancer. Today, the seventh day, he was quite silent—as silent, thought Noël Anson, as death. He was a sick, still man; and his throat seemed to be choking him, and his skin seemed to be burning him. They gave him grapes, but he turned his head away.

Now and then he opened his eyes and seemed, painfully, to look round the room. And then his eyes would fix on the door, and they would stay on the door, with that profound, absorbed look of one who is going to die.

Toward eight o'clock that evening Noël Anson decided that he must have some air—"or," he told Mason, "bust."

As he went down the stone stairway of the great white house in the Avenue Victor Hugo in which were the apartments, he almost caught up with a woman who was also going out, as if to dinner, a woman with a golden head in a chinchilla coat. Soft and shining she looked, and a faint scent was on the steps her feet had brushed. For a second he stopped, for just a second, then he strode on downward. The face of the golden head looked half backward at the noise of swift steps from behind her, but he did not see her, he passed her, as men pass the things that lie on roads.

"Boy, how is—your friend?"

Young Anson looked round, but did not seem to see her.

"Dying," he said. "Thanks very much." And he swung away as if he had not seen her.

That night, in the still, narrow corridor that joins life to death, Sir Roy Martel dreamed a dream. And in his dream he heard his own voice, quite clear and strong.

"And so," said the Roy Martel of his dream, "and so you've come!"

But she only smiled, a very little smile. She danced. A moon walked about the room.

"It would," thought Roy Martel. "There is no dream without a moon. . . ."

And the moon walked on the dancer's hair, and it seemed to him that her hair was a garden of golden flowers.

She danced, softly, softly, this way, that way, with a grave white face. It looked very white in the moonlight, and her mouth very red, and her swaying, shining dress very green, like grass.

"Oh, Consuelo!" said Roy Martel. "I love you, Consuelo."

"I know," said the golden wraith with a wise look; and she danced near to the bed on which he lay.

"Dear," he said, "I love you. Oh, God, I love you!

"Consuelo, have you forgiven me?" he asked.

And as she swayed by the bed on which he lay, he kissed the hem of her dress. She looked very grave.

"I have forgiven you," she said, and danced away to where the moon walked across the room.

"Thank God!" whispered Roy Martel.

She came and sat on the edge of his bed, a golden angel coiled in a dream.

"Why," he whispered, "I can see your wings!"

"Dear Roy! Poor Roy! So ill!"

"I'm not ill now," he said proudly.

Her hand brushed his face.

"Listen, Roy," she said. "Why are you such a cruel man?"

"Oh, I'm not!" he panted. "I'm not. But I have been very proud, Consuelo."

"One should be so proud," she said wisely, "as never to take a thought of pride."

"I know," he murmured humbly. "Pride is mud."

"Children play with mud," said Consuelo.

"We are as God made us, beloved."

"Oh, Roy, I'm as you made me! You found a girl in New York, and you taught her love. You were a great teacher, Roy. You said that love was like religion, it must be done well or not at all. And then because she was a girl, and danced and laughed and played, you came to think that the gold had turned to mud in your hand and you left her. Just because you thought you saw that boy kissing me on the terrace at the Vandermarks' ball! But he wasn't, Roy, he wasn't! He was only trying to, the poor boy. Oh, Roy, Roy! I'm surely as you've made me—to do unto others as it was done unto me—that's what I have done with the life you threw away, sweet!"

"Crucifying love!" whispered Roy Martel. "I too, Consuelo."

"You've been a dark snake coiled in the hole where my heart was; that's what you've been," she said.

"But now"—he weakly clutched her hand—"we'll be so happy, dear. We'll live together in your golden hair, Consuelo. . . ."

"Roy and Consuelo!" she whispered.

And in that dream of his, she seemed to dance and dance, like a fairy made of moonlight. . . .

YOUNG Anson awoke with a start and listened furiously. By Gad, he had been asleep. He listened to silence. "By Gad!" he thought frantically. "He's not breathing at all!" For always through the wide-open door between the two rooms, he had heard Roy's breathing. But now!

Then he saw that the door was closed! The door was *closed!* Who the hell had—that fool, that septic fool, Mason!

When Noël Anson opened the door of his friend's room he saw an amazing thing.

"By Gad!" he said. "By Gad!"

And he smiled thankfully, for the man on the bed was sleeping, and his breathing, though still harsh and broken, was as the breathing of a living man.

"Well," he thought, "now what d'you know about that!"—which was an Americanism he had caught from Consuelo's friends.

Never will Noël Anson know why, passing quietly through Roy Martel's room, he went out into the hall. Perhaps he intended to close the front door, always left ajar according to orders. But he did not close the front door, because, lying across the threshold, was a thing as still as a cut flower, a green flower. And it lay coiled; it seemed to Noël Anson as if it lay coiled in a gap in the world's rushing movement. And he stared down with eyes that did not see at the golden head spilled across a bent white arm . . . white as snow in heaven.

As he reëntered the sick-room Roy Martel stirred.

"Good Lord, boy, you're—crying!" he whispered hoarsely. Sick men are very tactless.

"Oh, am I!" snarled Noël Anson. He pulled himself together. "I'm so glad you're a little better, Roy."

"I had such—a happy dream, boy!"

"Ah!" said young Anson vaguely. "Did you! A dream. Ah! Just a moment, old man."

And he went out into the hall again. "Perhaps I was dreaming too," he thought. But there, lying across the threshold, was a thing as still as a cut flower, a green flower coiled so that its golden head was spilled across a bent white petal. And then——

"Good God!" whispered young Anson.

And he stared like an idiot at the stirring figure and the opening eyes. They were sleepy eyes!

"Sweet," said the lips of the sleepy eyes, "are you pleased now? Is your friend better?"

"But!" said Noël Anson. "But!"

And Consuelo, lying coiled on the threshold, smiled up at him a wise smile.

"You see, boy," she said, "I wanted to

cure you of your love for me—and I almost did, didn't I?"

He knelt beside her.

"Almost," he whispered.

"Yes," she said. "Because, Noël, you are such a good boy, and I am bad, so bad! Rotten I've been, sweet—and so I thought I'd give you a chance of ridding your heart of me. But when you passed me on the stairs this evening, like a contemptuous god— Oh, dear, love was too strong for Consuelo!"

He touched her hand. He kissed it, like a schoolboy.

Back in the sick-room, Roy Martel whispered: "I wonder if it was—a dream! It was so clear, boy! But I—suppose it must—have——"

Young Anson was staring at the toneless dawn outside the window.

"Of course it was a dream, Roy," he murmured reasonably.

But Roy Martel was not listening; he was asleep.

Often, as he grew stronger, he wanted to dream that dream again. And when, a few months later, he had a letter from Noël Anson in London saying that he and Consuelo were married, he pursed his lips and worked very hard.

Honoré Willsie Morrow's New Novel

The Devonshers

In March EVERYBODY'S, Out February 15

THERE is only one thing more dramatic than the fight of a man to come through clean against great odds, and that is the struggle of a woman. The fight of a woman is interesting enough when it takes place in ordinary surroundings. Place her in an extraordinary environment and the heights of drama have been ascended. In such an environment—one of compelling interest—Mrs. Morrow has placed her heroine, Eve Devonsher. There, hampered by her great personal charm, by the very blood flowing in her veins, by the enemies she has inherited, she works out her salvation. To understand the fall and rise of Eve Devonsher, to understand her family, her friends, enemies, you must understand Wyoming, the land that begat them. The people bred in the Rockies are like the ancient Greeks in one way. In judging their actions one must never forget for a moment the never-ceasing influence of their country on their concepts and motives. Wyoming is a land of enormous distances, of enormous loneliness, of beauty that sinks into the very depths of subconsciousness. It is in such a land that Mrs. Morrow lays her new story. It is emphatically the strongest, the greatest drama she has written. See pages 149 and 164 for other announcements.

March *EVERYBODY'S* Out February 15

A Novelette Complete in This Issue

The Ladies *of* Boccaccio

A Group of Moderns Turn Back the Wheels of Time and View Movie Land Through Their Italian Master's Eyes. Delicious Humor

By Stephen French Whitman

Illustrations by H. Weston Taylor

> Whereupon quoth Pampinea, smiling, "See, fortune is favorable to our beginnings, and hath thrown in our way young men of worth and discretion, who will gladly be to us both guides and servitors, and we disdain not to accept them in that capacity."
>
> The Decameron, Introduction.

THE other night my friend Rowland Tresize, one of whose faults is rather long-winded tales, was sitting with me in a clubhouse in Los Angeles. I made the mistake of remarking that, as a symptom of spring and its effects, the florist round the corner was flaunting himself in a fine new motor-car. "There is a story to that," Rowland Tresize returned. With which, he related the following apparently irrelevant history.

SOMETIMES (he began) the best of us, I suppose, are overwhelmed by a sense of monotony, of futility, of stagnancy, of somber boredom. So it happened to me a little while ago, on the first true night of spring.

Here, in the lounge of this club, so much admired for its stately evocation of the Italian renaissance, I found myself solitary. These antique chandeliers illuminated for me alone the great painted ceiling-beams so high overhead; these chairs appropriate for Lorenzo the Magnificent were empty one and all. From the dark garden beyond those lofty window-bays, a breath of spring blew in, to make melancholy perfect. Amid the silence of the great house so unaccountably empty of movement and laughter, a voice seemed to whisper:

"True, it is spring for all those who have fled this place to-night; but for you there is a book beside the bed. Go home, read yourself to sleep, submit to the inescapable fact that, although spring returns unfailingly, youth does not last forever."

It was, no doubt, the small, rather feeble voice of common sense.

"You are right, little stranger," I replied mournfully, and made for the nearest door. A page-boy appeared before me.

"Telephone, sir."

"What new persecution is this?" I muttered to myself in a sort of dull consternation, as I dragged my feet into the booth.

The voice of Mortimer Vaughan, the dilettante, came to me over the wire with its throaty, hardly specious English accent.

"Are you engaged for the rest of the evening?"

"Spread out your questionable wares," I sighed.

He hesitated, breathed heavily, as it seemed, then blurted out:

"There will be four of us. Gerald de Lisle and Beverly Berkeley are with me now. I mean, there will be eight, counting the ladies."

"Ladies!" I protested, starting back from the telephone mouthpiece.

"The Ladies of Boccaccio," Mortimer

Vaughan declared. "Do you mean to say that you, with your admiration for medieval Italy, haven't seen that show?"

"Ladies of the stage?" I inquired in hollow tones.

"Exquisitely so."

"You haven't perhaps observed that my hair is getting, as the novelists say, slightly silvered at the temples. Spring, as I have noticed with some dissatisfaction, doesn't have the effect on the hair that it has on the flowers of the field——"

"Pooh!" exclaimed Mortimer Vaughan contemptuously. "Hustle round to the stage-door of Siegmann's Gigantian."

"You know I'm a sort of invalid just now."

"They'll cure you. Hurry up."

So presently I entered the alley behind Siegmann's Gigantian.

Mortimer Vaughan's big touring-car, with the faithful Seumas at the wheel, was standing in the shadows by the stage-door. Climbing into the tonneau, I stumbled over the legs of Mortimer Vaughan—that worthless dilettante—of Beverly Berkeley, the motion-picture production manager, and of Gerald de Lisle, the composer. These three bad eggs were muffled, despite the spring air, in greatcoats that seemed abnormally distended; when I fell against them they clinked in a curious way, and uttered picturesque cries of apprehension. Compressing my lips, I sat down in a comminatory silence.

"He fears the worst already," Gerald de Lisle maliciously remarked, turning toward me his broad, dark, rather good-looking face, with brown eyes that owed their romantic aspect, no doubt, to the countless catchy waltzes that he had scribbled off.

"We shall call him our conscience," Beverly Berkeley said, beaming on me, through his horn-rimmed spectacles, with all his lean, nervous features. "And when he is moved to admonish us, we shall listen humbly."

Whereupon, without any reason, he gave all of us, including the faithful Seumas, some blows on our backs, then took off his new straw hat and threw it out of the car. I observed with pleasure what I had forgotten, that Beverly Berkeley's hair was—prematurely, of course—quite gray all over.

As for Mortimer Vaughan, that tall, slim, yellow-haired, haughty-looking esthete suddenly leaped from the tonneau, and raised his eyes toward some small, lighted windows high above the stage-door.

"Fiammetta!" he cried in a heartrending tone. "Emilia! Pampinea! Lauretta!"

The heads of these four of the Ladies of Boccaccio appeared in the little windows.

IT WAS difficult to see them clearly—in those refracted lights one discerned little more than the gleam of liquid eyes, the brilliant curve of cheeks, the rich conflagration of hair illuminated from the back. They cast their voices down to us in a silvery shower:

"Just a minute! We're trying to make ourselves look especially nice. A labor of love."

With a ripple of mocking laughter they disappeared. But from somewhere within—from their windows or others—issued the sweetness of singing, as if those charming Ladies of Boccaccio so loved their duties that they must still utter, after the curtain had fallen, these words, from a famous old English translation of the Decameron:

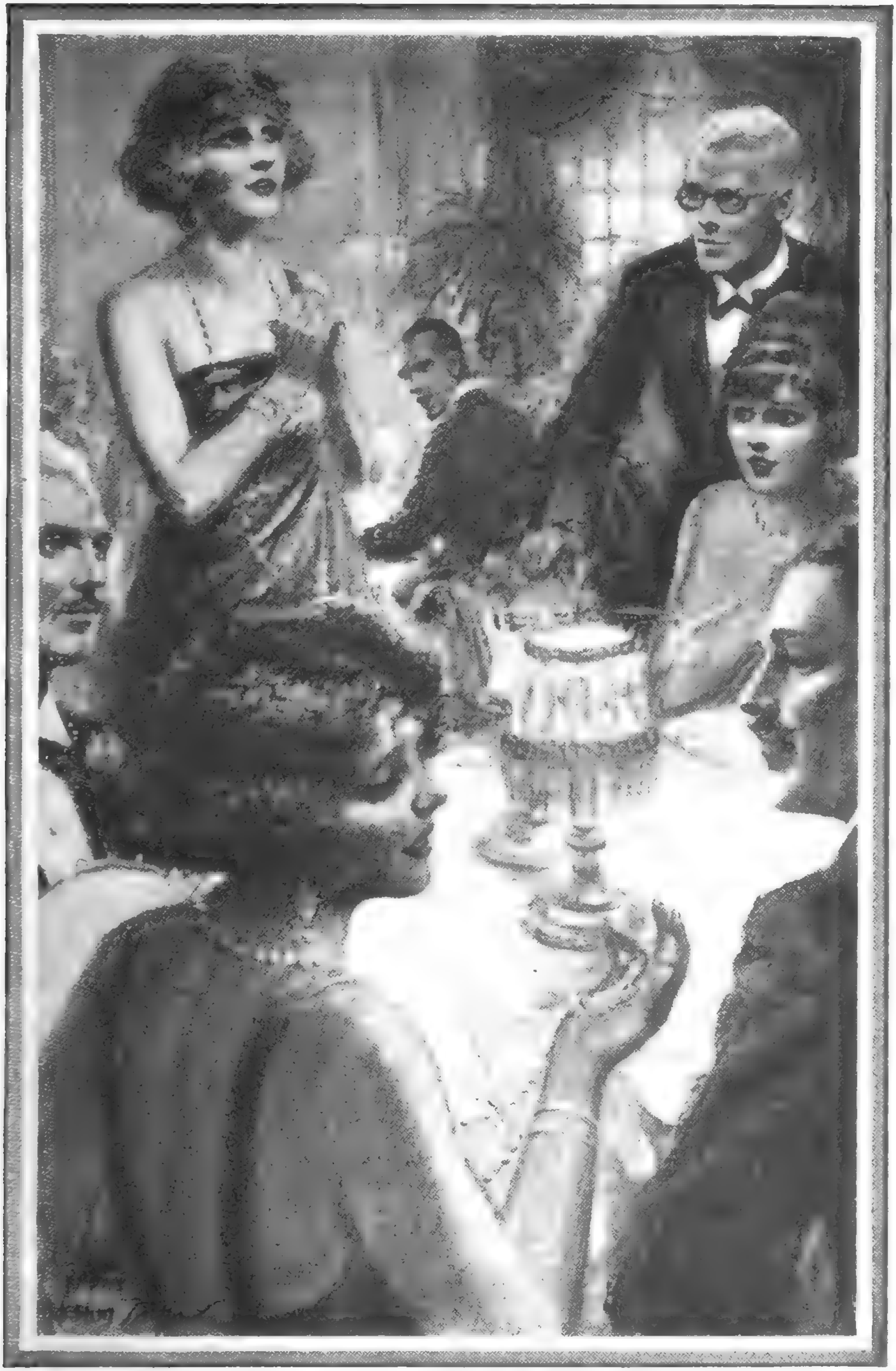
"If gladsome youthfulness
  In a fair lover might content a maid,
    Virtue and worth discreet,
Valiance or gentilesse,
  Wit, and sweet speech, and fashions all arrayed
    In pleasantness complete,
    Surely I'm she on whose behalf these meet
In one; for, love-o'erborne,
All these in him who is my hope I see."

The stage-door opened, brutally shattering the spell cast over us by these verses. Under the ground-glass globe appeared, in his shirt-sleeves, a vastly obese and pale fellow, with careworn countenance. He besought the dilettante in broken accents:

"Don't stir 'em up like that, Mr. Vaughan; I ask you as a favor. It's as much as my job is worth to have all this roughhouse back here. The boss has already threatened to tie a can to me, just on account of you. What harm did I ever do you? Oncet a gentleman, always a gentleman—or so it had ought to be."

Mortimer Vaughan retorted:

"Skinny, you make my gorge rise. I say nothing about the fact that you would hardly have acquired that oil-stock, that dadaist bungalow smothered in red-hot geraniums, or that lavender-colored flivver, if I had not from time to time condescended to this



"Short be the stay until thou come, and long may'st thou remain! I'm so love-struck I reck not of men's scorn." Fiammetta's eyes fixed speculatively on Zingo the dancer.

alley. But what I dislike about you most is your misanthropic nature. It is a night of spring. This soft California sky is powdered thick with star-dust; in hundreds of gardens the mocking-birds are warbling; the sea's fragrance embraces the perfume of innumerable roses. At this season and hour, you ought to be filled with a kind of divine insanity, or at least with a tender benevolence toward every spring-enchanted creature. Such a song as that which we have just heard should make tears squirt out of your eyes, or give you an inclination to rush forth into the night with daisies in your hair. Instead you understand it all as little as if you were some coal-black guardian of a palace on the Bosporus filled with the disenchanted ladies of Monsieur Loti. Have I insulted you sufficiently?"

"I ain't sure, Mr. Vaughan," the doorkeeper replied, with simple dignity, "but I guess you're trying to."

AT THIS moment there tripped out past him the ladies whom Mortimer Vaughan had called, in the way of kindness, Fiammetta, Emilia, Pampinea and Lauretta. Their taste was expressed in their smart summer hats and their light, French-looking frocks, their prudence in the pretty cloaks that floated from their shoulders. They entered the tonneau rather as birds might have done, without seeming to touch the step. The air was suddenly made interesting by a mélange of perfumes.

"To the Pantheon, Seumas."

The touring-car, flashing out of the alley, sped in a glitter of lights toward Hollywood.

We conversed.

Lauretta, a bright-eyed, boyish creature with bobbed brown hair, found Los Angeles rather slow. She was interested, however, in the movies, where those astounding salaries, those world-wide plaudits, were to be had for the asking. In the gleam of passing street-lamps she gazed at Beverly Berkeley, the production manager, and he, through his horn-rimmed spectacles, gazed at her. They found that they both liked Al Jolson, bungalows with white ramblers on the eaves, sausage for breakfast, Russian music, and large, square emeralds.

"You have precisely the face that the princess in our new production ought to have. A black wig—that's all we should need. Imagine the mash notes from London, Melbourne, Moscow, Bombay, Tibet!"

The faithful Seumas just missed a Ford. We all stuck our heads out of the car to scan the road behind us for a motor-cop.

But only a yellow taxicab was following us.

Pampinea, a prim, pure-featured blonde, thought Los Angeles delightful, though she admitted that her tastes were very simple. She, too, was a wee bit interested in the movies. So Mortimer Vaughan began gurgling in her ear:

"Yes, and that beauty of yours, blurred by the lights of the stage, was made for the precise revelations of the camera. How wonderful if you decided to become a picture star, and stayed here—yes, here—right here!"

Pampinea answered this speech with a long, innocent look.

The faithful Seumas, who had seemed incapable of greater speed, began to show us what he could do. Cars ran up on the footpaths before us. Pedestrians went diving to cover like frogs into a pond.

But still nothing pursued us except that yellow taxi.

Emilia, raven-haired, with a face as clear-cut as if molded from a Roman intaglio, neither praised nor blamed Los Angeles, but hinted that she now had hopes of it. Nor, when the movies were mentioned, did she change the subject. Her voice was so harmonious that Gerald de Lisle, leaning close to her scarlet lips, seemed to be trying to catch the most subtle of those tones, for his future profit in musical composition. They talked of chicken chow-mein, Harrison Fisher's magazine covers, Pomeranians, New Thought, and sapphires cut cabochon.

"I'm going to write a new waltz," stammered Gerald de Lisle, "and call it 'Emilia.'"

"Oh, how nice that would be!"

"Hang it! I'm going to write a whole show; and you shall be the prima donna."

Soulfully turning up her eyes, Emilia breathed:

"It is simply Fate. I felt that something would happen in Los Angeles. You know, I am very psychic."

So I found myself looking, at last, at Fiammetta. And all of a sudden I realized that looking at Fiammetta was the very worst thing that a temporary invalid could do.

SWIFTER than an airplane, past bungalows, realtors' shacks, Spanish mansions, oil derricks, scented gardens, and cafeterias, the touring-car sped into Hollywood, and arrived intact, by a miracle, in front of the Pantheon. We clattered upstairs to the big, pink, glowing room where four rows of tables stood round the dancing-floor. The trombones and trumpets wailed; the tom-toms thundered; the saxophones uttered their pathetic moans; and under clusters of colored lights the élite of Hollywood were revealed to us, shuffling round and round and bumping into one another.

Ambrosio, the aged but agile little Italian waiter, had spring flowers on our table.

The moment supper was ordered, Mortimer Vaughan announced:

"We comprise not only the Ladies of Boccaccio, but the gentlemen as well. Having fled here, like our antique prototypes, to escape the plagues of the city—which in this instance may be named monotony and seriousness—we are going to occupy ourselves in old Messer Giovanni's own true manner, with laughter, music, and piquant argument. But for accuracy in everything we do, a subject of conversation for the evening ought to be chosen. I propose that we adopt one from the Master himself, namely, 'Of Those Who Have Won at Last to a Joyful Issue Beyond Their Hope.'"

He sent Ambrosio for a banjo—the dance having ceased—and, turning to the blonde Pampinea, implored that the topic be sealed in the old way with song. To the interest of our neighbors, Pampinea, raising her white chin, consented as follows:

"What lady aye should sing, and if not I,
Who'm blessed with all for which a maid can sigh?

And that in him which crowneth my liesse
Is that I please him, as he pleaseth me,
Thanks to Love debonair;
Thus in this world my wish I do possess,
And in the next I trust at peace to be,
Through that fast faith I bear
To him. Sure God, who seeth this, will ne'er
The kingdom of his bliss to us deny."

So touching was her voice, so exquisite the melody despite the fumbling plunks of Mortimer Vaughan on the banjo, that a frantic clamor of applause arose from every side; and in the distant haze of lights and smoke sundry fellows could be seen standing upon their chairs, bowing, and pledging us. Pampinea blushed, cast down her eyes, and again looked deliciously prim.

"Why are you sad?" I inquired in my usual, unfortunate, stilted manner of Fiammetta. "Does this song affect you so?"

But I ought perhaps to describe Fiammetta's appearance.

She was not tall, but slender—or so one would judge at first glance. Everything about her was delicately fine and tapering. Her hair was opulently tawny and crinkling; her green eyes slanted upward a little at the outer corners; her lips had been fashioned, by that Destiny which is bent upon mocking man's pretensions to sanity, into a sort of pout. She had, in short, a queer, quaint, lovely face which seemed to have appeared out of another century, evoking recollections of fair medieval portraits, old tales of gallantry and chivalry, pearl-sewn missals, ladders of rose-vines, lutes, nightingales, and kisses on the moonlit balconies of castles.

She gave me a slow, disparaging look out of her slanting eyes, and answered:

"I am not sad, but bored."

"Well, so am I. Let us suffer it together."

She opened those medieval eyes of hers a little wider.

"You don't like these parties, then?"

"I detest them. I'm here under protest," I told her.

"But you can go any time!" exclaimed Fiammetta in a clear, scornful voice, and added, "For all me!"

"I know it, and so I will as soon as I've eaten my supper."

"So that's what you came along for!"

"Good heavens, what else do you think? To dance? Just at present I am an invalid with a rather high heart. To talk? There is nobody here who has any conversation, except Mortimer Vaughan; and I have heard all his lines over and over again. To flirt? At my age—kindly observe these gray hairs at my temples—at my age, my vis-à-vis in a flirtation has to be of unusual beauty, extraordinary wit, and intense general fascination. No, I came here to eat."

"What a brute!" Fiammetta whispered to herself in awe, and looked at me with a little more interest, as they always do when one starts like that.

The music began with a crash. The others jumped up to dance. Fiammetta, while nibbling at some lobster salad, began to tell me of her current love affair.

She had met him in Denver, when the show was there. To hear her, he was an Antinoüs for looks, and a paragon of all manly accomplishments. Now he wrote to her every day, as she to him. She took out of her wrist bag a letter that she had written to him just now, between the acts, in her dressing-room, on her knee. She asked me if I had a stamp, and would post this missive for her.

"Here is Ambrosio," I told her coldly. "Give it to him to post."

"Your rudeness isn't due to jealousy, I hope?"

"I, jealous? Ha, ha, ha!"

We sulked in silence. The others, all rosy and elated from their skipping about, returned to the table. It was at this very moment that "Zingo" appeared before us.

WE OBSERVED, drooping before our table, a man of indeterminable years and rather dapper attire, with a wet eye, a downcast mouth, and a general air of grief. He produced from behind his back Beverly Berkeley's new straw hat, with which, he announced in a voice of woe, he had followed us in a taxi all the way from Siegmann's Gigantian.

"Sweet Prince," cried Beverly, leaping up, embracing the stranger, and crushing the hat quite flat between their chests, "here is service! Here is unselfish devotion! What have I done for you in past incarnations that you should do this for me? Come; sit down; be one of us. Who the devil are you?"

"I am Zingo," the stranger answered sadly.

Zingo the dancer? We had heard of him, of course, but had never seen him before. The ladies, however, appeared to have made his acquaintance in the past. Perhaps, indeed, there had been something queer in their previous meeting with Zingo; for Pampinea, Lauretta and Emilia exchanged a stealthy, startled, roguish look, while Fiammetta, gazing at her plate with lips compressed, began to blush.

"This lobster salad seems to have increased your circulation," I remarked in low, bitter tones.

Fiammetta merely gave me a blank stare.

The first notes of the Marchéta resounded. I found myself alone. Under the rose-colored globes, in the crush of Hollywoodites, Mortimer Vaughan was dancing with Emilia, Beverly Berkeley with Lauretta, Gerald de Lisle with Pampinea, and Zingo with Fiammetta. My chin on my cravat, I engaged old Ambrosio in conversation.

"What do you think of this life, Ambrosio?"

Bending down his little, withered, satirical Roman visage, Ambrosio informed me:

"You know what I think, signore: that it is all delusion; founded on fallacies; less sensible than madhouse, because a madman at least does not try to be sillier than he naturally is. This music has an atavistic effect—but is that what was intended by evolution? In the promiscuity of the dance, especially in the constant changing of partners, we see nothing more nor less than the pageant of polygamy and polyandry. I stop with these examples. Yes, why go on? But when will humanity be satisfied to stand up on its hind legs, signore? *Chi lo sa?* And yet all this idiocy may be turned to profit. Consider my case. In my younger days I was tutor of philosophy and ethics to the children of the Duca di Damigiana, that notable amorist. Well, while teaching the young in the Palazzo Damigiana I nearly starved to death. Now that I am waiter in the Pantheon, and am abetting folly instead of wisdom, I own an apartment house, a ten-barrel oil-well, and two service stations."

"And the children of the Duke of Damigiana?" I asked him.

"*Per Bacco!* They've spent their inheritance in riotous living; for, after all, it's little use in this world to teach philosophy and ethics to any but the aged. Even then, in fact, the results may be negligible."

I pondered this for a while. A faint gust of a certain perfume touched my face. It was only Fiammetta floating by in the arms of the woebegone Zingo.

"And what is your opinion of love, Ambrosio?"

The old fellow gave me a narrow look, pinched his lips, and finally pronounced:

"Eh! Love is a malady that we have to make the best of. Nobody with any sense would choose to suffer its torments, any more than he would ask for chills and fever. But how can we escape it? No one is immune. There is no preventive inoculation for it. You may have it once, and presently catch it again; and so on, ad infinitum. Slender blondes are apt to make it critical for some; rotund brunettes make it nearly fatal to others; but some catch it easily from either blondes or brunettes. The only satisfaction we have is this; if one lets the malady run its course, one always recovers, at any rate for a while. Are you feeling ill, signore?"

"A trifle weak and faint."

"At your age—I judge you to be in your middle thirties—the ailment is apt to be especially painful. Why don't you go home at once?"

Too late! The dancers returned to the table; and wise old Ambrosio served in long-stemmed cups the mousse of sparkling grape juice. And soon I observed that the change of partners for this last dance had caused an interesting state of things; for now Pampinea, who had danced with Gerald de Lisle, would not speak to Mortimer Vaughan, and Emilia, who had danced with Mortimer Vaughan, would not speak to Gerald de Lisle. As for Fiammetta, who had danced with the melancholy Zingo, she would not speak to me.

Aside from this, the party was now quite jolly.

BUT perhaps I have not sufficiently described Fiammetta.

The contour of her eyes betokened the possibility of temperament. Her mouth, by a queer coincidence, seemed expressly made both for quarreling and for kissing. No other natural substance was of so fine a texture as her skin; no hair had so much life and flame as that crinkly red hair. And round her there clung, besides her perfume, a sweetness of youth, of latent wit—a provocative charm as if from a thousand stored-up tendernesses waiting to be evoked. She turned her green eyes toward Zingo the dancer. I heard her say to him:

"Have I counted right? There seems to be a superfluous gentleman here."

And they both instinctively glanced at me. I asked her:

"What would your inamorato in Denver say if he saw you now? No doubt he thinks you alone in your hotel, writing to him, before going to bed, one of those letters that burn the postman's fingers. But instead here you are, revolving round a dance floor in the arms of mysterious strangers, spoiling your digestion with French kickshaws at ungodly hours of the night, losing your sleep, your figure, and my esteem."

The cowardly Zingo stared at the ceiling. Emilia, Pampinea and Lauretta exchanged delighted glances. Fiammetta withdrew her hand from Zingo's, opened her wrist bag, powdered her nose.

"I think he would be well satisfied with me," she answered at last. "As for your esteem, please restrict it to your food, which you say enticed you here. If you feel gallant sing a madrigal to the mousse of sparkling grape juice. In conclusion may I remind you that you have already lost your own figure, and are now in the act of losing your own sleep?"

I decided to have no more to say to her.

"You've found a Tartar this time!" said Mortimer Vaughan to me, neighing through his high-bridged nose. "Look out for them when they have that kind of eyes, and that color of hair!" He tossed back his tow-yellow locks, and summoned Ambrosio, who presented the bill.

"And where are we going now?" asked the black-haired Emilia of the delicate scarlet lips.

"Well, we might take in a studio."

Emilia, Pampinea and Lauretta—poor things!—clapped their hands in delight. Beverly Berkeley suggested his studio, and promised Gerald de Lisle that there was a piano there. The ladies passed out to the cloak room; and somehow, as we gentlemen were making our exit, Zingo the dancer was inadvertently tripped by one of us, and fell prone on top of a neighboring table, his face in a mass of French pastry. Old Ambrosio, after wiping from Zingo's cheeks a rather surprising assortment of chocolate icing, meringue, and Maraschino cherries, thought fit to say:

"That was always a slippery place. Many a gentleman has fallen just there, in leaving the Pantheon. There's a fatality in these events. We don't live by accident, though accidents happen to us—but not accidentally. Excuse me, sir; I nearly overlooked this cherry in your ear. Yes, signori, in my old age I am a fatalist. I see the same things happening from the same causes over and over again. I observe the incapacity of man to escape his nature or his destiny. Those who attempt that escape must so soon return to their prison! Indeed, they haven't escaped at all; they have entered for a little into a dream from which they must awake. Behold the tragedy of the eternal crescendo and diminuendo of illusion. In the end we find ourselves, once more, face to face with ourselves. Of course I oughtn't to talk like this. It might be bad for the business."

With tears in our eyes, we went out to the rose-tinted foyer, where the ladies were getting impatient. Concealing our depression as best we could, we set out in the touring-car for Beverly's studio.

THE streets of Hollywood, their vistas blurred by the foliage of pepper trees, were empty except for some modest roisterers emerging from all-night lunch-rooms. We proceeded, as usually, at sixty miles an hour. I found myself sitting beside the blonde Pampinea, who, while Mortimer Vaughan whispered nonsense to Lauretta of the bright eyes and bobbed hair, maintained a glacial calm. At last, however, Pampinea sighed, lightly touched my hand, and murmured:

"Would you care to do me a favor?"

"What shall it be?" I returned in a manly voice. "Shall I bring down for your hair that crescent moon, which would complete your resemblance to the chaste and lovely Artemis? Shall I find for you on the seashore a mammoth shell for your pedestal, so that you may resemble the Venus of Botticelli, candid, full of a sad innocency, and inexpressibly fatal to the heart? Shall I merely sit here beside you, where I can breathe your perfume and lose myself in your eyes?"

"Thank you," Pampinea whispered, giving my hand a squeeze of gratitude.

For Mortimer Vaughan was looking at us in a chopfallen way. For that matter, Fiammetta was looking at us too.

We arrived at the studio.

With a kind word to Jake—that celebrated night watchman and bootlegger—we entered through the lofty stucco gates. The lot was deserted to-night. Here and there a light, like an expiring beacon, twinkled amid the purplish darkness, illuminating the corner of a building, or else the foundations of some huge Grecian temple or Italian palace. Indeed, as we advanced, under the blue stars that were half obscured by mist, we seemed to tread amid all sorts of antiquities, as if the long past had rushed in around us in fragments, at a sudden collapse of the law of relativity. And everywhere, on the long stages cluttered with Cooper-Hewitts and sunlight paraphernalia, in the dim colonnades of old Spanish patios and the shadowy archways of medieval castles, appeared cats, cats, cats, crouching, pacing, confronting one another, or stalking an imaginary prey, like the felines that inhabit ruins in the depths of jungles and deserts.

A great melancholy descended into our hearts. We huddled together in a species of vast dungeon, where the walls were festooned with chains. A shriek resounded. All the cats disappeared. Emilia had discovered a skeleton dangling in a niche. She rushed to Beverly Berkeley and hid her face on his breast. With his arm round her waist, he raised his head arrogantly, like a hero at bay; and despite his horn-rimmed spectacles and prematurely gray hair, he looked competent and noble.

A look of profound perplexity appeared on the dark, broad face of Gerald de Lisle, the composer.

"These ladies," he soliloquized acidly, "all seem to be distinguished as much by treachery as by beauty. Why should a sensible man concern himself with their sex? Let him turn to art, which will never repay him cruelty for devotion. That's what I shall do henceforth!"

But he had hardly finished when the fair Pampinea, who was standing at his elbow, said plaintively:

"I thought that art was improved by a little love!"

Gerald de Lisle looked thoughtfully into her eyes, and, unless I am very much mistaken, began to tremble.

"Well— Ha! At any rate, so it's said," he blurted out. "Look here, there's supposed to be a piano somewhere on this lot. Shall I play you that waltz I've just thought out, the one that I'm going to name 'Pampinea'? "

"But you were going to name it 'Emilia,' " Pampinea gently returned, looking up at him reproachfully with those large, blue, innocent orbs.

"There must be some dreadful mistake."

"But I heard you say——"

"No! Never! It was you! you! you! that I had in mind when that melody came to me like a celestial inspiration——"

So Pampinea and Gerald de Lisle went away together to find the piano. And Beverly Berkeley and Emilia went away to climb to the top of the medieval castle. And Mortimer Vaughan and Lauretta set out to explore the Spanish patio. As for Fiammetta and Zingo the dancer, they too were invisible.

"Ah, well," I reflected, "every calamity may be found to contain some benefit."

And so, lying down, in that compo-board and plaster dungeon, upon some couch-like instrument of torture, I took a little nap. The harsh voice of Jake the watchman awakened me. Pushing aside a veritable blanket of cats, I sat up and heard:

"Mr. Berkeley and them ladies and gents has been tooting the horn for you like everything."

"Merciful heavens! Jake, do you think they really need me any more? Am I indispensable? I had such an exquisite dream. I dreamt that I was home in my own bed, and that nothing was going to happen till eight o'clock in the morning."

"Well, it looks like they wasn't going to move a wheel without you."

"That's what it is to be popular, Jake," I yawned. "Watch out you don't get that way."

Jake regarded my somewhat rheumatic lethargy with disfavor. He resumed, more passionately:

"And the longer you keep 'em waiting, the more they'll toot. And I wisht to Gawd you'd all pull out of here pretty quick, and can this pandemorium of noise, because I've got a truckload and a trailer of Scotch coming past here from San Pedro in a coupla minutes, and I want to speak to the driver, but not with folks in their pajamars leaning out of every window and saying, 'Where's the fire?' As they are right now, for half a mile around, thanks to you lying here amongst them cats."

What reply was possible? Honest Jake had the right on his side. Hobbling down to the gate, I climbed into the touring-car.

"To the Abbey of Thelemy!" cried Mortimer Vaughan.

And we were off again, into the dewy, misty countryside, toward the savor of the sea.

THELEMY ABBEY was one of those places that enterprising restaurateurs establish far out in the country, amid a complicated network of roads, in groves of live oak, eucalyptus, or sycamore trees, where the mocking-birds all learn to sing scraps of "Romany Love" and "Neapolitan Nights." However, we observed that the driveway was empty of motor-cars, and that the window lights were ominously dim. In fact, a significant rattle issued from the house—the unmistakable rattle made by a waiter piling up the chairs. We rushed in, as the saying goes, "in a body," with quite a rattle of our own.

"Hold!" cried Mortimer Vaughan, addressing himself to the solitary waiter, a Herculean Greek with a foolish, guilty visage. "Hold, Achilles, remote and degenerate descendant of the great Alcibiades, for whom this was nothing but the shank of the evening! Can you look at me and dream of closing this place at one o'clock in the morning?"

Achilles, the massive waiter, dropped a chair, and tragically explained:

"Ees the rule, Mr. Vogan. One o'clock, she feenish. Look round. All ees gone. Has some sense, those other pipples."

In the white-walled dining-room lined with mirrors and dismally lighted by a half-expired chandelier, we all stood about the monumental Achilles and looked at him in aversion. Then Gerald de Lisle, ascending the deserted band-stand, began to play on the piano some funereal chords. Beverly Berkeley demanded:

"Where is the manager of this academy of woe?"

"Ees gone home to slip, Mr. Berkeley. He leave me here to lock up. Gussie, too, is locking up—the cloak-room lady, you know. En I got to take Gussie home, becuss her Cadillac is in paint shop till to-morra. So you see, gemmens and ladies, ees all feenish for to-night."

Zingo the dancer, wiry, dapper, of indeterminable age and mysterious presence among us, came forward, stood gracefully before the Grecian colossus, and carefully pronounced:

"Is it true that your name is Achilles?"

"Achilles is right, yessir."

"Well, Achilles, if you will be so good as to stand still for a moment, I'll make your nose genuinely Hellenistic."

Whereupon Zingo the dancer swung valiantly from the shoulder, misjudged his distance by only a foot or two, and, after turning a sort of somersault, ingeniously brought down upon his prostrate form an avalanche of chairs.

Mortimer Vaughan, Beverly and I left Zingo to the ministrations of the ladies. We led Achilles aside. While flicking specks of lint from his coat lapels, we gave the Greek some serious advice.

"You see what happens, Achilles, when you treat your clients so."

"Another time you might not get off so easily. You would look nice to-morrow night, Achilles, serving your fastidious clientele with a lop-sided nose or a shiner."

"On the other hand, Achilles, while our natures are passionate, and sometimes dangerous, we have our moments of golden benevolence."

Achilles cast a pathetic glance at our faces, gave a Gargantuan moan, and went to set a table. A cry of joy arose. The piano music became thunderous under the agile hands of Gerald de Lisle. And Mortimer Vaughan, in the kitchen, explored the larder, devised a menu, set a huge pot of water to boiling, and mixed with his own esthetic hands a mess of spaghetti sauce. He brought back with him into the dining-room a rich odor of frizzled garlic; and the gleaming-eyed Lauretta, whom he suddenly clasped for a waltz, looked up at him sentimentally and sighed, as they circled around:

"How strange! You remind me now of a Florentine count who once made love to me rather successfully. Do you think it possible to duplicate past joys?"

"One can try!" he uttered lyrically, from amid his new aura of frizzled oil and garlic, as they revolved, faster and faster, to the music of the waltz.

THE table was set, and we huddled ourselves around it. By an unlucky chance I found myself beside Fiammetta again. We glanced at each other coldly. I was moved to say:

"Tell us more about that paragon in Denver. What is the secret of his fatal fascination? I ask you, is it justice that one man should be favored with such charms, and all the others do without? But that's the way in this world! One can only grin and bear it. And fortunately there aren't quite enough Apollos to go round—so don't bother your head about me. Yes, we other poor wretches can still pick up a crumb of romance here and there."

"I hope," Fiammetta returned, after gazing in brave renunciation at a dish of pickled onions, "I hope you're not getting an inferiority complex."

"I beg of you not to worry. I shall get along."

"No, I'm not sure that I won't; for there's something rather pathetic about you."

Fiammetta leaned closer, as if to scrutinize me the better with her green eyes. Her perfume became a little more obvious. It was a subtly rampant scent concocted by some diabolical genius of odors, and guaranteed to suggest a number of striking ideas to the unaccustomed victim. Still I returned her stare defiantly, though by this time I was very likely cross-eyed. Then Zingo the dancer, who sat on the other side of her, intruded his repulsive personality.

"May I help you to some of these curried shrimps?" he asked her hoarsely.

I took the words out of her mouth.

"Yes, and while you are doing it listen closely to me. Try to learn, Zingo, never to interrupt a flirtation. I'll say more. When you see a girl throwing herself at a fellow's head, endeavor to mind your own business. You are with ladies and gentlemen now, and ought to observe these fine points of etiquette. Don't let it happen again."

Zingo—who somehow had lost all the skin off the bridge of his nose since our arrival at Thelemy Abbey—regarded me chopfallen. And before the tawny-haired Fiammetta could think of anything good enough to say, Mortimer Vaughan rapped sharply on the board.

"As it is now another day," he announced, "we ought to have a new topic of conversation. Yet it is true that we hapless wretches, wedged in with all this beauty, could not possibly discuss any subject save that of the heart. Then let us merely take another text from the immortal Giovanni Boccaccio, on the same theme, too—to wit, 'Of Whoso Hath Anywhere Wrought Magnificently in Matters of Love.' So, inspiring ourselves with recollections of great historic or legendary lovers—such as Romeo, Ovid, Abelard, Brigham Young, Catullus, Leo Ditrichstein, Pericles, Lord Byron, and King Solomon—we may do a little better, as dawn approaches, than hitherto, and, if Fate be kind, attain at last so greatly as to kiss our ladies' hands. And now for the necessary song."

Gerald de Lisle dashed away to the piano. And this time all eyes turned to Fiammetta, who thrilled us by singing, with an unexpected loveliness—although we should have known that every one of her performances must be lovely—these words, from the same famous source:

"What was the charm I cannot rightly tell
That kindled in me such
A flame of love that rest, nor night, nor day,
I find; for, by some strange, unwonted spell,
Hearing, and touch,
And seeing, each new fires in me did light,
Wherein I burned outright.
No other than yourself can soothe my pain,
Nor call my senses back, by love o'erborne.

Oh, tell me if, and when, then, it shall be
That I shall find thee e'er
Whereas I kissed those eyes that did me slay!
O dear my good, my soul, ah, tell it me,
When thou wilt come back there,
And saying "Quickly," comfort my dismay
Sometime. Short be the stay
Until thou come, and long may'st thou remain!
I'm so love-struck I reck not of men's scorn."

She finished with her eyes fixed, by accident perhaps, somewhat speculatively on Zingo the dancer. Rather shaken by that music, and leaning my elbow—as I discovered afterward—in my curried shrimps, I muttered to Fiammetta:

"That Denver creature is utterly unworthy of such constancy! Why isn't he here? If I were in his place, wouldn't I follow you to the end of everything? See me staying behind and letting other fellows nudge your foot under tables!"

"It isn't my foot you're nudging," Fiammetta returned.

In fact, it was Zingo's; but how in the world did it get there?

I cannot imagine what made me do it. Without premeditation I reached behind Fiammetta and caught the ubiquitous Zingo by his waistcoat. The lining must have been frail; for Zingo, recoiling and tipping his chair over backward, left the greater part of that garment in my grasp. And we saw, to our disgust, that all this time Zingo, under his waistcoat, had been secretly wearing suspenders.

He got up, very pale except for his skinned nose, and mumbled:

"I demand satisfaction."

That was how Zingo and I came to fight our duel.

MORTIMER VAUGHAN agreed to act for me, and Beverly Berkeley for Zingo. The Ladies of Boccaccio, who had risen at the crash, drew aside in horror—excepting Fiammetta, who still sat with a charming calmness consuming a ripe olive. As for Gerald de Lisle, he retired to the piano, and dashed off, with what seemed to the rest of us an extraordinary levity of mind, a sugary Spanish waltz. But the seconds, after consulting together, and with Achilles the waiter, announced the conditions of combat.

The meeting was to be *à outrance.* The principals were to eat napoleons until one or the other dropped. For it appeared that there were in the pantry three dozen of those delectable pastries which, according to Achilles, ought to be consumed without any more delay. He brought them in on an enormous platter; and Zingo and I sat down at the table face to face with each other.

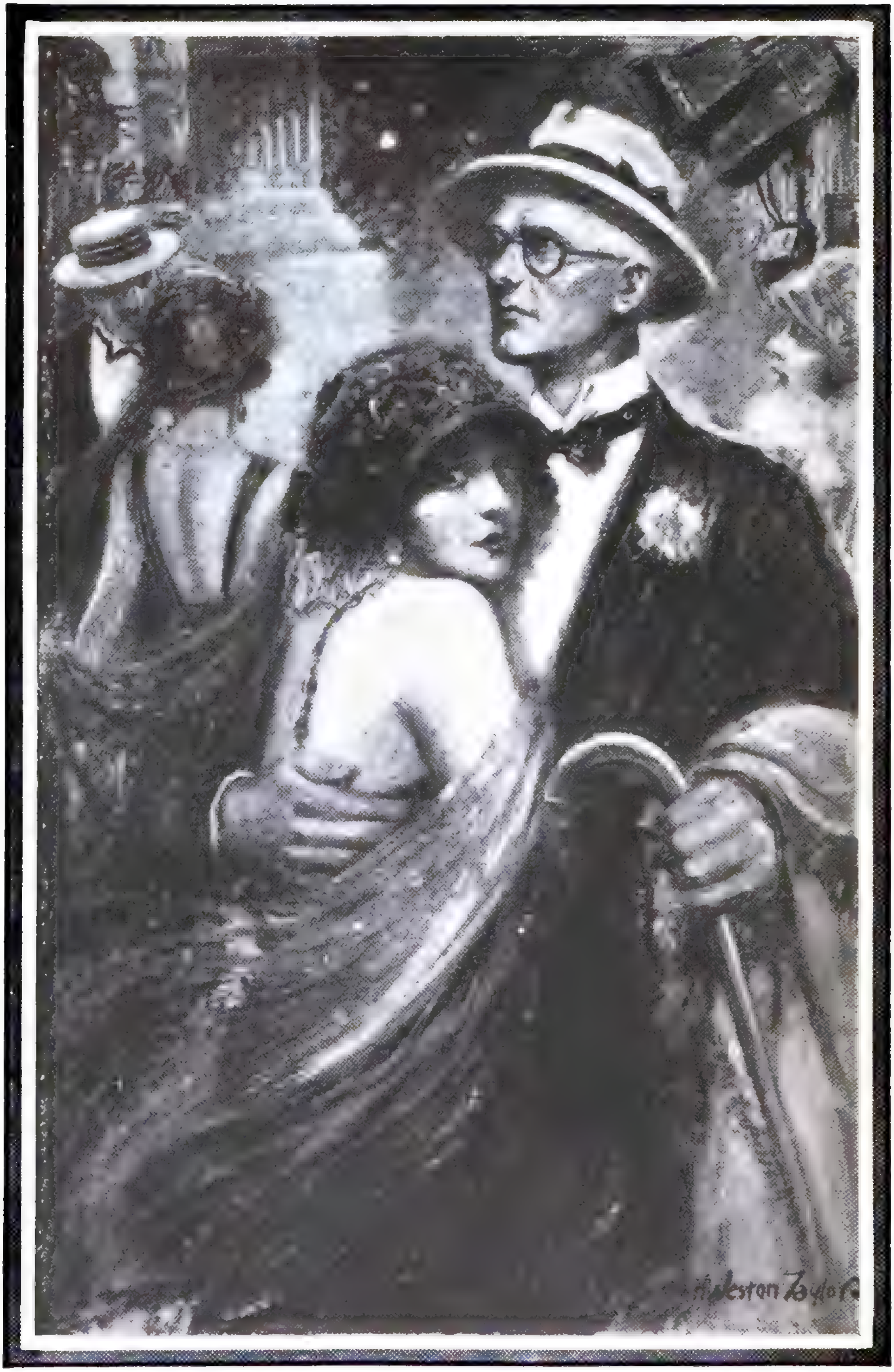
We received our final instructions.

"One!" cried Mortimer Vaughan.

And to the "Gavotte" from Mignon, Zingo and I, glaring into each other's eyes, devoured a soggy and slightly rancid napoleon apiece.

"Two!" We exchanged a defiant look, and went at it again. "Three!" I began to discover a slight monotony in them. "Four!" These napoleons were more rancid than I had believed. "Five!" We were going rather slowly now, as the frosting had a certain cloying effect. "Six!" How did I ever get mixed up in this affair? On Fiammetta's account? But was any woman worth it? I looked with a furtive and sickish curiosity at Zingo the dancer. He seemed as fresh as ever. "Seven!" What! Seven napoleons? On top of the curried shrimps, the spaghetti, the jellied consommé, the mousse of sparkling grape juice, the little cakes, the lobster salad, the sweetbreads, the hors d'œuvres, and what do I know besides? Simply as an experiment in physics, the thing was impossible.

"Eight!" I caught a dizzy glimpse of Fiammetta's medieval eyes, contemplating me with profound attention. Revivified, I reached out my hand in a powerful gesture,


Arleston Taylor

A shriek resounded. Emilia had discovered a skeleton. With his arm round her waist Beverly raised his head arrogantly, like a hero at bay.

seized my eighth napoleon, and fell to. So, in the days of chivalry, knights, galvanized by a look from their dear ladies, accomplished prodigies in the lists, though fainting a moment before.

Besides, these napoleons no longer seemed rancid. My keen sense of taste was blunted, my fine gastronomic discrimination ruined—perhaps forever. I was aware of nothing any more except a vast, vague, dull and greasy ennui. "No," I said listlessly to myself, as I toyed with my ninth napoleon, "after to-night I shall never eat again: I am nourished for a lifetime." Then, happily, as my ninth napoleon hesitated mulishly at my epiglottis, it occurred to me to glance at my antagonist.

He had turned Nile green. His protruding eyes were staring at me without any human expression. He swayed in his chair; and, as Mortimer Vaughan called "Ten!" a look of naïve surprise overspread my rival's features, as who should say: "What's this? Is it then a dream? Where am I?"

And indeed I had finished mine to the last crumb, and Mortimer Vaughan had been forced to bend down and bellow the command in Zingo's ear again, before that poor creature, reaching out like a biliously painted automaton, possessed himself of his tenth napoleon.

All the spectators leaned forward, breathless, to see whether he would eat it.

Gerald de Lisle stopped playing the "Miserere," and came down from the band platform.

A cry of admiration arose. For Zingo, after gazing at his tenth napoleon long and languidly, had suddenly, with a convulsive movement, crushed it into his mouth.

Yes, he was game enough; but all to no avail. When he sank back, his open mouth still contained a sizable piece of pastry.

And now Fiammetta rose, came forward, and peered into Zingo's mouth. His glazed eyes rolled over toward her flower-like countenance; I think he showed a gleam of recognition. His Adam's apple heaved up and down once or twice. But the fragment of the tenth napoleon remained stuck in Zingo's throat.

Fiammetta shrugged her admirable shoulders.

"You have lost!" she exclaimed, with an accent of scorn. Here, evidently, was a girl who had no use for failures. And as I stood up, intending to go somewhere and lie down, Fiammetta linked her arm with mine, and uttered in a tone of exquisite concern:

"Is it just my imagination, Filistrato—for that's what I'm going to call you—is it just my imagination, or are you looking quite as well as you did? Perhaps you've eaten something to-night that's disagreed with you? Could it have been the spaghetti?" She examined my face with her clear, green, pitying eyes, and said, ever so softly, "Filistrato, I have an idea that you wouldn't be so very unattractive if you took a little exercise, like dancing, and didn't overeat."

Gerald de Lisle, his broad, dark, romantic face abeam, began to play one of his waltzes, with Pampinea seated on one side of him and Emilia on the other. It was a passable waltz, with suggestions in it of breathless spring nights, of moonlight filtered through magnolia trees, of whispers stifled by a kiss or the sighing of the sea.

"Oh, hang this invalidism!" I said to myself. And, clasping the adorable Fiammetta in my arms, I waltzed her and the ten napoleons around and around and around.

Yes, there's no doubt of it—love has a tendency to make a fellow prodigious.

WE HAD all returned to the table. Achilles had served the strawberry parfaits. Then we saw in the doorway a robust, bare-headed young woman clad in black, with a well-matured, moonlike face down which some tears were streaming.

Mortimer Vaughan exclaimed:

"Surely, Gussie, this is not thou! What's gone wrong with the lacrimal ducts? Come, sit down. Use my handkerchief freely, and tell us everything."

Gussie brought herself nearer. Suppressing a sob, she uttered in trembling tones:

"Yes, have your fun, Mr. Vaughan; but remember that even a cloak-room girl has feelings. I don't know why I stayed here like a fool till this time of the morning, specially when not one of you didn't take one check from me. Here's your hats and wraps"—she cast round her a tear-filled glance—"lying all over the chairs in this dining-room, jes' as if I was less than the dust beneath your feet. Don't think it's the tips!" she sobbed defiantly. "I don't have to do this for a living. I got stock in a thousand-barrel gusher that's coming in next week or so; and, what's more, I could marry a multed millionaire, if I wanted to be an ol' man's darling and live at Beverly Hills—or so he says the last time he was in here lit. But I did think that when you blowed in to-night you'd anyways say 'Hello!' or 'How's tricks?' or make some kinda wise crack like you realized I was still a youman being. And I jes' sat there all this time amongst them empty hooks, and said, 'We'll see!' But no; and that's how men are—all the same, here to-day and gone to-morra. I jes' come to tell you that I'm going home, and Achilles can take me in his Packard, and you and your lady friends can lock up for yourselfs, and put the key under the doormat—which you'll remember where it is when you trip over it going out, like you usually make your exit from here, my dear Mr. Vaughan."

We all looked at Mortimer Vaughan. Beverly Berkeley laid his hand on the dilettante's shoulder.

"Mortimer, have you been trifling with this child's affections?" he inquired in a deep, rich voice. "If you have, by heaven, I shall see justice done."

The aristocratic Mortimer sent round him a stare of dismay. Wherever he turned, he met only stony eyes. Pampinea tossed her corn-colored head, Lauretta her bobbed, brown tresses; and the dark-haired Emilia expressed her contempt for such knavery by a curl of her scarlet lips. The dilettante protested desperately:

"I swear I never saw her before except across the cloak-room counter. A courteous smile, a word of respectful banter, a mere kindly glance, and they seem to go mad about me. I ask you, is it my fault if I'm irresistible? And now, shall we be going?"

"Get on your hat, Gussie," Beverly Berkeley told her in a paternal way. "You're coming along with us. We'll see that this wrong is righted, never fear." And to Mortimer Vaughan: "My fine fellow, the day is passing when the woman always pays. You will learn this time, perhaps, that you've met your Waterloo."

"Or Brandywine," amended Gerald de Lisle, amid a groan from all.

Bidding Achilles farewell, we escorted the weeping girl to the touring-car, in which we discovered Zingo the dancer curled up on the back seat. I, for my part, was shocked to see him there, as I had hoped that he was dead of indigestion and carted away. For while ladies may be at one moment attracted by victory, at the next moment—so undependable are their natures—they may discover something touching in defeat.

SURE enough, my apprehensions were soon justified. As the car sped on toward the sea, the fair Fiammetta began to comfort Zingo. Her whispers of sympathy mingled with the sobs of Gussie the cloak-room girl, the sermon that Beverly Berkeley was preaching to Mortimer Vaughan, the compliments that Gerald de Lisle was paying Emilia and Pampinea, and the impartial laughter of Lauretta. Yes, I heard Fiammetta murmuring to that sodden sepulcher of pastry, inert and wan in his corner:

"But wasn't ums a hero for me all the same? More a hero than that big, nas'y man who had so much more room for those nas'y napoleons?"

At the word "napoleons" a tremor passed through the wretch, and he uttered thickly the mysterious sounds:

"Guh! Umbluh! Booh!"

Quite disillusioned by the feminine character, I turned to Lauretta, whose bobbed hair gave her—if one disregarded her eyes—a vaguely masculine look of seriousness. And all the rest of the way to the beach Lauretta and I discussed such rational topics as the Malthusian Theory, the Code of Hammurabi, and the functions of *x*.

But here we were at the ocean.

There was now no moon; but a soft, vast diffusion of starlight descended from the heavens upon the water, and even transformed, into silvery and romantic architecture, the hideousness of the long pier crowded with catchpenny booths, and the tawdriness of pseudo-Venetian buildings that filled the seafront. It must have been rather late. One discerned a rare light here and there illuminating a popcorn wagon or a frankfurter shop. Out on the pier, the black framework of scenic railways and giant wheels stood forth against the thick-sown stars like the skeletons of bizarre constructions from the Arabian Nights. Even the Caravel, a restaurant in the form of Columbus's flagship, lay on the edge of the pier with all its ports extinguished, its superstructure bereft of riding-lights, wrapped in the immaculate and reproachful calm that comes before the dawn.

A sense of folly enveloped me like a wet and icy sheet. I stood still, watching the others scamper out on the pier, approach the Caravel, and pound upon its doors. "And what if those doors opened?" I asked myself. "One would find inside only the banality of music, the weariness of food and dancing, and perhaps the ineffable boredom of perfumed kisses."

Still I waited to see what those deluded souls would do.

Beverly Berkeley climbed the Caravel's side. A dim little figure, confused amid the stars, he ran up and down the deck, struck a nautical attitude, looked westward. His voice sounded far away:

"Come up here! The view would surprise you. I can see the pagodas of Cambodia, the domes of Samarkand, even the Eiffel Tower of Paris, France. Come up quickly, and let's cast off. Let's embark for Cythera."

I saw the rest of them in some way or other climbing the Caravel, the gentlemen aiding the ladies. I turned my back on them. The faithful Seumas was sitting in the car. I got in beside him, and said:

"Seumas, my brave gossoon, you have the best of it. Like this, you can sleep if you like till they come to wake you up, which will never be soon."

Wrapping my legs around the gear-shift and hand-brake, and pulling up a rug over my nose, I snuggled down. But Seumas, who till that moment had always been a stiff-backed, ruddy piece of machinery, answered mildly:

"I nade very little slape. When I'm out like this I spend me spare time thinkin'. The worruld is a pretty place at night, d'ye know? There's the moon, like a beautiful woman wanderin' through the sky, lookin' for her lost swateheart, the sun; but she's not here the now; so perhaps she's found him, and good luck to thim both. And there's the stars, that's always there—in the daytime, too; only it takes the dark to make ye see thim, like it takes the dark to make ye see a whole slather of things. And at night a swateness comes out from all livin' things, that's lackin' in the day—from trees, flowers, the wathers of the sea, an' from a fella's mere mimorees of the girruls a fella remimbers. Ah, the night's not so bad, if ye can be alone an' still in it, an' turrun it gintly over in yer mind."

But I'm afraid that at this point I fell asleep.

THERE was a cheeping of birds in the ear, a persistence of milky light against the eyelids. It was dawn, and I awoke in the deserted touring-car, which stood in the driveway surrounded by oak trees, before the carved Spanish doorway of Mortimer Vaughan's abode.

I limped indoors. An odor of sausage and hot-cakes faintly scented the hall. In the big living-room lined with Spanish leather and bright with porcelain vases full of flowers, they were all seated in a circle, waiting for breakfast and, while waiting, arranging the future of Mortimer Vaughan and Gussie the cloak-room girl.

Beverly Berkeley, very stern in his horn-rimmed spectacles, resumed, when he had bade me good morning:

"It seems to be proved that the said Mortimer Vaughan, by many philandering words and languishing looks—behavior in which he has been cynically adept for years—encouraged, tempted, and incited this poor little girl to a maidenly trust and expectation. How about it, Gussie?"

The robust and moon-faced Gussie, raising her bovine eyes from behind her handkerchief, gave a strangled moan, which the company took for assent.

Beverly, standing up, shook his finger at Mortimer, who cringed, with all his features disordered by dread.

"Your hour of reckoning has struck! It is the sense of this tribunal——"

But Gussie, rising, gulped out, with a gesture of repugnance:

"Thank you, oh, thank you, Mr. Berkeley! But I don't want him now."

Every one stared at her dumfounded, and Beverly muttered:

"Not want him? Why, what's come over the child?"

Fixing Beverly with a look of adoration, Gussie pronounced:

"I've jes' changed my mind, that's all. After how you showed him up I know that he wasn't never what I thought him.

There's nothing noble in him; no, nothing for a party to look up to. But you, Mr. Berkeley—you're noble! What girl wouldn't think so, the way you've pertected me? And all that time when you used to blow in with him, and leave your hat with me, I never seen it, because his false, flashy ways had blinded me, while you was so quiet and modest—strong and silent and noble. No, it never come to me till to-night, when you stuck up for me, and I seen the difference between you, and how I'd misplaced my affections, jes' like a pitcher star might do in the movies. But perhaps maybe now we've got into the fifth reel at last, where all mistakes is righted?"

The ladies regarded Gussie with admiration. Mortimer Vaughan arose, turned his back, looked out through the French windows at the garden, his high, square shoulders shaking with emotion. But Beverly Berkeley gave a shrill cry of incredulity and terror, darted out into the hall, and slammed the door behind him. We heard the roar of Mortimer's touring-car diminishing on the road to Hollywood.

I strolled over to Zingo the dancer, who by this time had largely lost his satiated look. After all, why should one envy the fellow for having attracted so flighty a creature as Fiammetta? He seemed pleased to see me again, and we began to chat.

"I'm so sorry, Zingo, that I've never seen your act."

He leaned over and whispered to me, "But I'm not really Zingo the dancer, you know."

"No? Who are you, then?"

"Sh-h! Lean closer. I'm Algernon W. Weymmiss, Fiammetta's paragon from Denver."

And he gave me a poke in the ribs.

I reflected. It is marvelous how an occasional nap will freshen one's wits.

"Wretch," I told him in ringing tones, "I thought it was you! But you had shaved off your beard."

"My beard?" he inquired, feeling his chin.

I observed that the others were paying attention to us.

"Yes, you reprobate, the beard that you wear in the bosom of your family—not following musical shows about the country, not sailing like a pirate of the affections under false colors. You had better start letting it grow this morning, so that when you go home your wife and nine children will recognize you."

"What are you talking about!" he cried.

"You are Algernon W. Weymmiss, of Denver, Colorado, aren't you? Do I have to say any more? Shall I recall to you the name of your wife—Euphrosyne—and the names of your nine little daughters—Euterpe, Clio, Thalia, Melpomene, Terpsichore, Urania, Erato, Polyhymnia and Calliope? Wait, not so little, after all; for if I remember rightly Terpsichore has three children of her own, and Calliope one. You ought to be ashamed. A grandfather masquerading as a stage-door John!"

" 'Tis false!" he screamed.

"Tell that to the Marines. Why, man, I know your story!" I turned to the others. "Only look at his face. Is that rectitude, or guilt, that he displays there? Nine children, four grandchildren; and at such an age he tries to eat ten napoleons. Bah! It would be pathetic, if it were not merely squalid."

I discovered Fiammetta at my elbow. She took my arm, and said to me serenely:

"It seems a little late. Will you see me to my hotel?"

So we left them. And I understand that when they had eaten the sausages and hotcakes they played mah jong, and that Gerald de Lisle, toward eleven o'clock in the morning, surprised every one by naming his waltz, not "Emilia" or "Pampinea," but "Lauretta," and that just at noon Pampinea forgave Mortimer Vaughan provisionally for his great fickleness, and that all this time Gussie and Algernon W. Weymmiss discussed notorious instances of manly devotion flouted, of maidenly trust betrayed.

However, let me return to the sunrise and Fiammetta.

HAND in hand, Fiammetta and I went down to the gate, between the flowering borders, under the dewy oak trees, amid the glory of another dawn of springtime, to the inspired warbling of a mocking-bird. The fragrance of countless blossoms rose up in an effort to rival Fiammetta's fragrance; the jealous sky, still like damask, sent forth its rays to search for some imperfection in the damask of Fiammetta's countenance. In vain: for she still epitomized the freshness of a new day, her exquisitely slanting eyes unclouded, her tawny hair vital with life, her slender body moving with an invincible soft grace. And yet she confessed that she was rather tired.

"It's because you were bored," I suggested. "You ought to have talked more to me."

"Well, talk to me now, and cure me."

We strolled beneath rows of eucalyptus and rows of pepper trees, in the clean, empty avenues where the milk-wagons had not yet arrived. Far off, the mountains, their tops still streaked with snow, raised their sharp indigo outlines against the sunrise. At last we hailed a taxicab returning from some late or early journey. And presently, the cab entering a business district as if of a deserted city, Fiammetta withdrew her small hand, whose coolness my hand had finally warmed a little.

"I must tell you," she said, "that I didn't believe all that stuff about his wife and nine children."

"Of course you didn't. In fact, neither did I."

"But I wanted to go home, and that seemed to me an interesting way to leave. And then, I can always see him again. He will attend to that," she confessed dreamily, leaning back in her corner, and closing her eyes. Suddenly she opened them, and remarked, "As for you, it seems to me that your face is very familiar."

The cab stopped before the hotel, as cabs have a way of doing sooner or later.

"And when am I to see you again?" I asked.

"Why should you? Are you insatiable?"

She gave me a look of amazement.

"Good-by, then," I said, and watched her pass in, without looking back, through the revolving doors.

Three minutes later, quite against my will, I was at a telephone.

"Fiammetta?"

"Well?"

"It's only Filistrato. Were you already asleep?"

"No, I waited a moment before going to sleep so that when you telephoned you wouldn't wake me up."

"Fiammetta!"

"Yes, my poor Filistrato."

"I have remembered a little of my Boccaccio. I want, by way of farewell, to quote you a passage."

I heard the slightest hint of a yawn. The sweet voice drawled over the wire:

"Is it an awfully long one?"

"Well, judge for yourself." And I quoted from memory: "'Then quoth Filistrato, I have, for my ill-fortune, been subject unto Love for the charms of one of you; nor hath humility nor obedience availed me but that, first, I have been abandoned, and afterward, have gone from bad to worse, and so I believe I shall fare unto my death. Wherefore it pleaseth me that there shall be considered by you to-morrow no other matter than that which is conformable to my own case, to wit, Of Those Whose Loves Have Had Unhappy Endings.'"

Fiammetta made no reply for a while. Then she said:

"Wait a minute. I can't answer you without the book."

And when I had waited, I heard her read this passage:

"'Fiammetta, whose locks were curled and long and golden, and fell over her white and delicate shoulders, and whose soft rounded face was all resplendent with white lilies and vermeil roses commingled, with eyes in her head as they were those of a peregrine falcon, and a dainty little mouth the lips whereof seemed twin rubies, answered, smiling, And I, Filistrato, that thou mayest be the better cognizant of that which thou hast done, I presently will and command that each prepare to discourse to-morrow of that which hath happily betided lovers after sundry cruel and misfortunate adventures.'"

Fiammetta's telephone receiver clicked. I went out into the morning. Astonishing, how buoyant one may feel if one takes the trouble to be up at that hour! I looked inquisitively into the reflection of a plate-glass window; and it seemed to me that a little silver at the temples was not so dreadfully disfiguring, after all.

MY FRIEND, Rowland Tresize, having concluded his tale, was silent for a time. But presently it occurred to him to explain:

"So it was that the florist round the corner came to buy himself that nice new motor-car."

Mine

Despair—It Grips a Man When Disaster Comes. And Yet Pablo Ince's Remedy Was Simple

By Ethel Watts Mumford

A RUSH of wolfish wind and a slither of half-melted snow followed Ellery Stone into the entry. The gas flame wavered, sending gaunt shadows of the newel post flickering up the stair. Ellery closed the door, shook his sodden shoulders, and brushed the slush from his hat. Then he glanced wearily at the steep ascent before him. The walls were discolored, the linoleum torn, each worn step sagged in the middle.

The house was very silent, as if the fury of the night had quelled the activities of the dozen or more artists and musicians who hived in the ancient building. He turned mechanically toward the little box under the brass slide that held his visiting card, and stood for a moment contemplating the smeared pasteboard that bore his name and his former address—"The Royalton," transfixed by an erasure. "The Royalton!" The regal name mocked him. How far away it all seemed—the days of affluence, the nights of entertainment, the cocktail hour, train-catching for the country club, the rendezvous of good fellowship or sentiment — all worth — what? Again he shrugged. Frankly asking himself that question, he could find no answer. Everything? Nothing? Anyway, neither these people nor these things could reach him now, nor he achieve them.

There are natures that, when hurt, seek the lair. The instinct of the animal origins of the world. It is the stricken beast's desire for a shelter in which to suffer, or die, it may be, unmolested. It was this insistent demand for solitude that had driven Ellery to the attic under the roof of the doddering house on South Washington Square.

One day his friends had sought him out with words of sympathy, with offers of help; the next day he was gone, his haunts knew him no more. A lawyer, a total stranger to him and his world, settled up his bankrupt affairs, sublet the suite in the fashionable bachelor apartment, and gave no clue to his client's whereabouts. The shock of his losses, and the sudden realization that he was nearing the middle fifties and turned out to face the world anew, with an income of less than a thousand dollars a year, and a physique none too reliable, had stunned Ellery mentally and bodily.

Now he slowly turned from the rapt, unseeing contemplation of the name-plates, and looked into the semi-darkness of the shaft that toiled upward to the pale oval of the glass *œil-de-bœuf* that opened onto the roof. He sighed.

With a sudden clatter the storm door was jerked open, the inner gave to a vigorous push. Once more the floor swirled with snow, the wind eddied about the empty hall, shaking the feeble gas light and sending the ghost-shadows scurrying up the stairs.

Ellery turned and confronted the newcomer, a boy in his early twenties, with chestnut hair the wet winds had curled like hyacinths in spring, gray eyes that dared the world, a mouth that laughed, a brow unlined and care-free, an almost classic head surmounting the powerful physique of an athlete in training.

"Hello!" the arrival exclaimed. "Mr. Stone, isn't it? I'm Pablo Ince, and I have the room next door to your studio. Some night, isn't it?"

The reckless joviality of the young man rubbed the recluse on the raw. What was the use of entering into any sort of alliance with a creature so out of sympathy with all one's needs? Doubtless this boisterous person painted cubistic daubs and received glowing assurances of immortal fame—whatever that might be worth; or perhaps he sang canticles and played on the virginal and thought himself the rehabilitator of music upon the earth.

"Yes," the older man snapped. "Rotten weather!" And he proceeded up the stairs, determined on obdurate seclusion.

But his neighbor was at his heels, discoursing gaily. "Jolly old house, this. Notice the details of that molding? Best period Adam. And the ground-floor newel post, did you ever see a better? Did you get that coil of acanthus leaves in the scroll? And the skylight—Gad! Some design, that! I like to be on the top floor so I can see it close to—the acanthus motif again leading up to the oval of light; and in the daytime the color through that old glass stripes the whole side of the hall with amethyst—ever notice it?"

ELLERY STONE was on the point of snarling a denial, but he had known bitter loneliness, and in spite of his porcupine humor, he craved human companionship. He fitted the key to the reluctant lock and threw open the door.

"Come in," he said ungraciously. "I've got a couple of bottles of near-beer on the window sill."

"Jolly!" exclaimed Ince, following his host into the darkness of the studio. "Wait—here's light."

He struck a match, and the square, bare walls flickered into being. A moment later the gas fixture reeled itself still and showed the emptiness of the room—an iron bed, a deal table, a mirror, a few kitchen chairs—nothing else, except an array of photographs on the mantelshelf.

Ellery obtained the beer bottles, rimmed and coated with snow, got the opener and poured the amber contents into two substantial tumblers. He grinned at his own thoughts. Why had he bought *two* glasses at the five-and-ten-cent store? Had his subconscious mind misdoubted, even then, his complete retirement from the world?

"What do you do, Mr. Ince?" he inquired. "Paint?"

"Me! Paint! Oh, good Lord, no!" the youth exclaimed fervently. "I know too much about painting to ever try it myself. Who's ever going to equal Rembrandt, or Leonardo, or Holbein, or Memling, or good old Mike the Angel? Not to mention Veronese and Albert Dürer, and Van Dyck, and Rubens, and all the rest? I've got all I can do to appreciate what *they've* done. Paint? Not on your life!"

"A connoisseur, I see." Ellery laughed in spite of himself at his guest's cordial denial of personal effort.

"Yes," said Ince, stretching himself comfortably in the nearest chair and holding up his beading glass to the light. "Given my opportunities—and I don't neglect any—there is none better. Look at that beer!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Was ever color more gorgeous? And glass—did you ever stop to think what an astonishing thing glass is? Perfectly transparent, yet as a container solid as metal, a marvelous creation! And then, think of all the variations of which it is capable. I never see a window-pane, or a tumbler, or a crusted vase from Cyprus, that I do not sing an inward pean to glass!"

"You are a poet?" Ellery challenged. "'Ode to a Grecian Urn'—that sort of thing?"

"Not a bit of it, creatively speaking." The young man shook his head with a strange, half satisfied, half envious smile. "No, it's with that, as with painting. All I can ever hope to do is appreciate that which has been written. I love poetry; my one regret is that I do not know more languages. I could then have more open doors to the world's literature. I've picked up French and German and Italian by exchanging lessons with foreigners who came over here unprovided with English vocabularies, but I am never sure that they really speak their own language well—without patois of any kind, I mean. However, though my pronunciation may not be of the purest, at least the wells of thought have been unsealed for me in these other tongues. I'm taking Spanish now."

Slowly and with careful savoring of every drop, the student drank his beer. His host drank also, his eyes fixed with curiosity upon the curly head before him. Yet he forbore to question. What business was it of his? Of what interest to him was this desire for erudition on the part of a fellow lodger?

"You aren't doing anything to-morrow,

Mr. Stone," Ince observed casually. "Would you like to go up to the Hispanic Museum with me in the morning? And there's a free concert in the afternoon—not bad at all."

Irritation suddenly gripped Ellery. What right had this cub to infer that his time was no longer of any value? "No, thanks," he snapped. "I shall be busy all day."

The young man rose, held out his hand and smiled with such a flash of white teeth and such a gleam of sun in his gray eyes, that all impertinence was blotted from his words.

"Sorry, Mr. Stone, another time—and, say, you mustn't get a grouch, you know, because you've lost your money."

Stone flushed. "What do you know about it?" he blurted.

"Oh, just the newspapers," the boy replied. "I read them pretty thoroughly. You see, I have so much time, all the time there is. It's my present to myself. *All my time is my own.* If I give any one a slice it's because I want to; but I don't give any one the right to bank with me, see? Honestly, don't be sore because you've had a jolt. Why, the world is perfectly wonderful as soon as you get rid of all the possessive pronouns. That's the trouble—always. Well, good night, and thank you a lot for your hospitality. If you change your mind about going along, just tap on my door in the morning. I shan't leave till ten. You'll hear my Big Ben explode all right. So long!"

The door closed behind his extraordinary visitor, and, fascinated in spite of himself, Ellery made his simple toilet and sought his cot. He grinned as he thought over the conversation—"the possessive pronouns." Perhaps the boy was right, they were the great trouble with the world—possessive pronouns—mine, thine, his—he got no further; he was asleep.

THE battering of the alarm clock next door woke him. He heard a cheerful whistle, followed by considerable splashing. Evidently the extraordinary youth was getting up. The new day had come, mild as spring and sunny as April. The tall window flooded the room with light, in which motes floated like the gold flecks in Danziger's liquor. As was his wont, Ellery's nostrils drew to a sneer at the thought of past luxuries. The recollection of the indictment of the possessive pronouns crossed his mind, and he frowned, nodded, grinned, kicked his feet free of the covers, and, acting on the spur of the moment, crossed the room and knocked on the partition wall.

"Hello!" came the cheerful response. "Changed your mind? First class! Say—I've got some coffee; have you an egg? I'm hungry this morning."

"Yes," said Stone, surprised at his own levity. "The ostrich has just been here."

Ten minutes later the recluse found himself facing his acquaintance of the night before across the steam of excellent coffee, while the erstwhile beer glasses served as breakfast cups.

"Ah!" said Ince, holding up the coveted egg between thumb and forefinger. "Did you ever observe how really beautiful an egg is?"

"I don't believe I ever thought about it," Ellery confessed.

"An egg," the enthusiast of life went on, "is a marvel. Look at the texture of that shell—it's like porcelain. No wonder the wise Chinese tried to imitate it—and that shape, that perfect ovoid—and the color, that translucence, like a pearl, that reflects the color of the yolk inside. I almost hate to boil it." With which remark he dropped the egg into the water bubbling over the little alcohol lamp.

"I wish I had your power of enthusiastic observation," said Ellery dryly.

Ince rolled himself a cigarette of very cheap tobacco, and offered the makings. "Oh, you will! You haven't realized yet that you have time, that you really, actually own your own time. It's like having a bank account, and not knowing that you can draw on it youself. Lo and behold! one day you timidly cash a check on your own time—and then Monte Cristo, my dear Mr. Stone, isn't in it! Voilà." Ince waved a slim hand with a gesture that hung the walls with tapestries, covered the floor with Persian rugs, loaded the table with chased silver, and peopled the dusty corners with waiting slaves.

"And now, seeing that the world is mine, I offer you all you desire of it. Let us go out and take it. There is a lot of perfectly good sunlight I haven't sampled to-day, and some excellent air. We will walk for a while—my legs invite me; how about yours?" As he talked, Ince proceeded to do his share of the cleaning up with methodical thoroughness. "I wouldn't have," he announced when the meager housekeeping was expeditiously finished; "a lot of *things*. They have to be cared for; they become leeches. Now, your hat. Gad! What a glorious day!"

Charmed into acquiescence, Ellery Stone followed his guide down the rickety stairs. Now, for the first time, he saw the purple light upon the wall, the exquisite details of the transom dome, the masterly design of the newel post in the lower hall, and smiled at Ince's broad back and springing step.

They crossed the Square, glowing and sparkling in the early light, and swung on and on up the Avenue. Insensibly the aroused circulation of his blood sang through the veins of the hermit of many months. This was the way one felt of a morning on the links. He was surprised that one could acquire the sensation on the street, free of charge. He had somehow grown to think it an expensive luxury.

He walked freely. It was too early for any of his former associates to be abroad, and the locality one they would not be likely to frequent. Little by little self-consciousness fell from him; he even permitted himself a weak little jest or two.

The day turned out to be most satisfactory, even to a man of his trained tastes. Ince was a discerning critic. With unerring instinct he led his companion from one masterpiece to another. They walked and talked, and exchanged dissertations on matters of art, literature, architecture, sculpture, manners, customs, and music. Late afternoon found them weary and content on a bench of Washington Square.

"NOW," said Ince, "let's see—carfares twenty-five cents each, lunch fifteen; that's forty cents for the day. How much can you afford for dinner?"

"I suppose," Stone replied, "I could go a dollar, because I've lived this last week on delicatessen."

"Too much," the cicerone retorted. "Not more than sixty cents; that's enough. I know where you can gorge for sixty. If you have a dollar a day to spend—income, I mean—after your rent is paid, and clothes and laundry, then you've all you can possibly need—of course, there you are. Many and many a good Emancipate can't join us, because he does not—even cannot—possess the little that one must have to defy needs. That is the one true tragedy of life, except, of course, the worse one of being smothered by the ownership of things."

"But," said Ellery, "one can't keep on digging up museums and parks every other minute."

"And why not?" demanded Ince. "Look, what you get when you realize what you have. Why, no J. P. Morgan in the world can own and operate a whole museum, or have *all* the pictures; and isn't there free music when I feel like having it? John D. beats me out on the theaters and opera, I grant you that; but on the other hand, I've got my time, I tell you. He's got to live up to what he *has*, and look after it. I don't. I can go and adore a Rembrandt if I want to, and I *don't* have to watch it or worry about it.

"When it rains, I retire to my private library, for I am the Public, and I've got him beat again. It's a grand building. I doubt if I could have improved on it if I had designed it, or advised the architect myself. And it was all done for me without my giving it a thought—yes, and well done and stocked with books that I don't have to lock up in steel cases, or even keep dusted. My librarians are paid by somebody else to look after me. I am an omnivorous reader, and I have my pick of all literature. I sit in comfort, in rooms carefully ventilated and warmed by experts, and feed upon the wisdom of the ages. If my eyes are tired, I can look up a free lecture, and go to hear somebody talk about something he really knows thoroughly.

"Just realize for one moment, Mr. Stone, that you, *you*, are the Public, all these are your servants: that cop over there; the man who lights up my beautiful Washington Square with his electric lights; the dispenser of books in my library; the conservators of art gems in my museums; the gardeners who grub around and beautify my parks for me; my river fronts; my inspiring Battery. I am the Public. I am only an individual when I go into my little room on the top floor of yon rookery, and then I don't give a whoop—I sleep."

"I see; I begin to see." Stone slowly drew himself into a more jaunty attitude and regarded the advancing policeman with an almost friendly eye. "I begin to realize the infamy of the possessive pronouns. My young friend, you are a philosopher."

"Of course I am a philosopher," said Ince. "I am a voluntary philosopher. Most of them are made, not born. Most people have to be painfully and laboriously thrust into philosophy. I elect philosophy. I have always thought that the trouble with most philosophers is that they didn't begin young enough to have real red-blood enthusiasm about it. After they've had all sorts of hard knocks and experiences they begin to realize how they could have avoided them; but they didn't *begin* by avoiding them. I did, and I do.

"Of course, I thank whatever it is I am moved at the moment to thank—as I explained to you before—that I am able to be what I am by the aid of my little income of a thousand a year. It permits me to exercise my body and my brain as my body and brain desires. My philosophy is not for the driven poor—not a bit of it—but it makes a very rich man out of the possession of a mere livelihood. But I must recognize another thing. It takes a person of refinement, education, appreciation, natural responsiveness and voracious curiosity to be a proper loafer, a dilettante loafer, a specialist in living. I have always thought I was particularly suited to teach the art of being the Public. Now I find this is true. I find I enjoy it. You, Mr. Stone, are my first pupil."

He beamed on Ellery with a look of delighted approval, as he took off his soft hat and ran his long fingers through the close-curling hair, and, lifting his eyes to the purpling twilight sky, gave vent to a sigh of sheer well-being. "Some sky!" he said softly. "That's my sky—don't you like it?"

And Ellery did like it. Leaning back on the creaking bench he let his gaze penetrate fold on fold, as it were, of gauze, blue, mauve and tawny gray, to where the far stars looked down gropingly, as if they in turn sought to penetrate the ethereal gossamers, and take a straight look at the earth.

The youthful philosopher and the middle-aged rebel sat side by side in silence. They each had all the time in the world. They would dine when they were wearied of watching the stars come out. Stone was cashing his first personal check upon the Bank of Days. He began to feel rich, marvelously, fabulously rich, precisely as this extraordinary boy said he would. Ellery withdrew his gaze from the stars and stared through the dusk at Ince. What was he? Some delightful pagan come to life again? Some inspired forerunner of what, in the future, would be called plain common sense? This child in years had put aside all paltry ambition, while he cultivated his personality.

INCE rose, smiling. "Come on," he advised; "getting chilly. Let's go and coal up the bunkers, that we may make good time to-morrow. Good food in a cheerful spot, and great, grand, glorious hours of real sleep. I do so enjoy sleeping when I am asleep. I'm sure I'm losing something very savorous, indeed, because I cannot be conscious of my unconsciousness. I only know how good it is on the edges. Coming and going—both delightful, but I can't help coveting the middle. However, I've never yet thought of a way of overcoming that difficulty."

He linked his arm through Ellery's—and together they crossed the Square, walked on to a dingy side street, and turned in at an unpretentious door. A moment later they found themselves in a softly lighted, brick-walled cellar, where, at tables, a crowd vociferously talked and smoked, and voraciously consumed spaghetti. Instinctively Ellery drew back. It was so long since he had faced so many people—the sedentary habit is easy to acquire, and once fixed is hard to overcome. But Pablo Ince was no stranger to the diners, and before his companion could beat a retreat, they were both surrounded.

"Hello, Pab!" "How goes it?" "Where've you been—to the Zoo?" "Sit with us." "What did you get for nothing to-day?" "Who's your friend?" "Bring him along!"

Ince grinned at them and waved them aside as he introduced collectively. "This man, fellow citizens, sits at my feet—I am his Guru. Doubtless you don't know what a Guru is. A Guru is a teacher—an adept and initiate, a sage, a saint. I am that adept and sage and saint. I am teaching my neophyte by precept and example how to live like a millionaire on a farthing, a pittance, a mere kopeck. I am proud to be a Guru. I prophesy that my student will one day be an adept himself."

He turned to the embarrassed man at his

side with a whimsical smile. "Now, I will introduce to you a lot of foolish people. They have aims, they burst with futile ambitions. Each one thinks himself a unique specimen of the genus homo, crammed full of genius. They are nothing of the sort. They are appallingly alike; there isn't one of the lot that will ever amount to a hill of beans, and they rave about their petty accomplishments, and take on with melancholia and suicidal mania if some stupid publisher or art jury, who actually knows even less than they do, throws them down. Look at 'em, take a good, long eyeful—that costs nothing, too—then you'll know, if you ever run into any of 'em anywhere, that you needn't bother with 'em—a lot of hectic, egotistical discards. Get me?

"Now, Louis"—he patted a passing waiter cordially on the shoulder—"we will take that little table over there; and don't you let any of that rabble try to come over and join us." With a jaunty wave of dismissal, he dispersed the little group before him, and led the way to his chosen corner. "Now, Louis," he ordered, "we want the biggest feed you can dig out of the menu for forty-five cents—you can get fifteen cents apiece from us for a tip, and we won't spend more than sixty cents. So, if you run up the bill, it comes off your graft. Now go to it."

The pouch-eyed Greek grunted and turned away. Ince spread his tiny napkin and delicately selected a stick of gressini.

"Observe Louis," he admonished Stone. "He is a waiter because he is a man-hater, a misogynist, a cynic, and some other things I won't go into. He loathes people, so he enjoys watching them feed. The average human shows up so badly when he eats, and Louis sees and hears and stalks among them, scorning and despising them. He has found his perfect path in life—as I have found mine, as you will find yours—and in that he is superior to all this bunch as I am, and as you are. He may be independent of the possessive pronouns, for he wouldn't have anybody or anything as a gift he can't enjoy except in vitriol. He's got the wrong side of a right idea. However, *he* thinks that it's *his* affair. He doesn't know that it's mine, too." Having elucidated the mental processes of Louis, he dropped the analysis of human failings, regarded the section of bread beside his plate, and observed: "Curious thing, yeast. Ah, there you are, Louis. Don't you juggle those knives so near my eye—I'm timid."

They finished their meal in fraternal silence; a nod sufficed to indicate when they were ready to go. In restful companionship they tramped to the scaling door of the old house and up the interminable stairs. On the landing Ellery paused and held out his hand.

"Ince," he said, "I cannot thank you enough. You are my Guru. I'm old enough to be your father, but I'm ready to learn, my son. I imagine you have guessed how bitterly I needed your teaching."

"Look here," said Ince. "It's up to me to thank you, you know. I didn't know what a grand sensation it was to be a Guru. Say, that chap at the dump said something about the Zoo. Let's go to-morrow. How about it?"

Ellery laughed. "My time is yours, you can draw on it all you please, but"—he hesitated—"don't you ever get despondent? Aren't you ever so doggoned blue that even your philosophy isn't worth while?"

"ME, BLUE?" Ince's expressive face screwed to a twist of unutterable disgust. "Blue? I should say so. Lord! Blue! I get that low in my mind sometimes, the bottom falls right out of everything. But when I get that way I hike over to the Museum of Natural History and spend a couple of hours with the skeletons of the dinosaurs and the saber-tooth tiger and the giant sloth, and after I've been trying to figure out the universe in terms of millions of years, my grouch begins to flatten out, and pretty soon I quit being bored, and I'm cured. Try it the next time you get that way. It'll cure anything except a tight shoe. Good night."

This was the beginning of Ellery Stone's adjustment with the world. Envy, responsibility, anxiety, worry, all the evil horde were far away with the tabooed possessive pronouns. Now he learned to walk alone, to seek his own diversions, specialize in his own interests. Two or three days in the week he shared with Ince, when some public concert or free lecture or special feature brought them together, or some luring day dragged them forth to sylvan wanderings in the parks. Never had a Guru a more responsive pupil, and Ince gloated over him with frank delight.

"It isn't often you can catch a grown man without the sort of ties that won't allow him to see straight. But, dang it! it's a joy to see you grow into common sense. *Now* you know how to spend your time and be independent. Why, you've got *me* beat," Ince admiringly conceded, "when it comes to using the world. Why, you're twice as much the Great Public as I am. I do believe you've surmounted all desire to own anything, even your clothes. It's great! It's colossal! That's what it is!"

And, in truth, the change was extraordinary. Ellery's rancor against misfortune having vanished, his awakened senses gave him delight. Intensely he enjoyed the workings of his own mind. His self-consciousness vanished. When he met old friends he was simple and natural. Their evident sympathy amused him. The few who climbed to his attic he made welcome with no apology. He almost laughed in their faces at the thought that his time was all his own, to do with exactly as he willed. He accepted their invitations when they appeared attractive to his mental palate without the smallest feeling of obligation. How could there be obligation when the possessive pronouns were dismissed? And now, at last, he had the time to do what he had always intended to do in the days of affluence—write. The deal table in his all-but-empty room became littered with papers, with odds and ends of pencils; spilled ink was soaked into its wood, spilled ink spotted the bare floor.

"Look out," the Master admonished, "the first thing you know, you'll slump into Desires again. You'll have ambitions, you'll fall for vanity or egotism, just when I've taught you all you can have and be, by *not* trying to have and be." But as he observed that these activities never seemed to interfere with the disciple's willingness to start for anywhere and stay as long as the entertainment proved good, he gradually ceased to raise objections.

As Ellery's work took form, he began to conceal it—"inconsequent jottings," he called his voluminous writings when he mentioned them to Ince at all. He labored stealthily, with a guilty joy in his heart, and hid the result with a magpie's cunning.

"And then came spring," insinuating itself into the good graces of the city, and Ellery watched it dawn in Square and Park with a new wonder. Clouds and smells, the cries of street vendors, hand organs, the feet of dancing children, the myriad little things of spring took on new color.

They loitered in the byways of the parks together, the Guru and his pupil, listening to the song of newly arrived birds, watching the feathers of uncurling leaves, the infinite flowering of beauty, the ripple of the waters, where swans ruffled and courted, the misty, vernal light that seemed to hide a rainbow in its whiteness; the astonishing green of new grass; the gray bloom of upthrusting ferns. No longer could Ince be induced to keep his hat on.

"I always stand uncovered in the presence of Spring," he explained, and the shimmer of bronze on his tight hyacinthian curls seemed to Ellery to belong rightly to the budding landscape.

More and more Pablo Ince seemed the young pagan. In the world intensely, but unbound by its fetters, almost the demigod in his perfect freedom and unclouded joy.

FOR some time now, Ellery had devoted his evenings to his writing. The days were so full of the important things of Renewal, that it seemed theft to steal time from their contemplation. Yet his book—for book it was now become—wanted recognition. The pages piled on his desk had a demand of their own. Mysteriously the work had separated Master and Pupil. Every night now, and nearly all the day, Ince was out, wandering doubtless, gazing at the moon, or wrapped in contemplation of the flickering patterns of new leaves on the asphalt walks of the Square.

As his work seized upon him more and more, Ellery felt almost apologetic. He could not overcome pride in its development; an insidious sense of ownership enveloped him. This was *his*—and yet he had abjured the possessive pronouns. He did not confess his backsliding, and he laughed at himself for his growing reticence—he who had learned frankness at the feet of this boyish Emancipator.

Came a night of luminous splendor—a May-time moon, that made silver spiderwebs of the fire escapes; that turned the flapping wash hung on the roof into white sails of fairy shipping; moonlight that stole through the purple glass of the *œil-de-bœuf* at the top of the old stairs and barred the side-wall with ghostly amethyst.

Ellery worked late. On the table a powerful lamp with a reflector threw its yellow rays on closely written sheets. With burning excitement he wrote, thrilling with the thought of completion. Somewhere a clock struck twelve. Ellery threw down his pencil and leaned back. The opened window let in the creeping breeze, a faint perfume of lilac from a heroic bush in the yard, and long oriflammes of moonlight spread upon the floor. Within himself Ellery felt Power stirring, brushing his soul with heavenly inspiration, a vibrant answer to the night and its beauty, to the silence that seemed crowded with messages. There before him lay his finished work, and he knew it to be good. It was his, his own, made of bits of himself formed by his will into a mosaic greater than himself.

A hurried step on the stair—a knock on the door. Ellery's quick "Come in," admitted a middle-aged gentleman in evident irritation.

"Mr. Stone—Ellery Stone?" he inquired. Ellery nodded. "Well, here's a letter for you." The stranger paused; a half amused, half disgruntled grin twisted his clean-shaven lips. "And I'll be hanged if I know why in the world I came out of my way to deliver it for that perfectly casual young man."

"Thank you," Ellery said smiling. "I quite understand."

The stranger shrugged, muttered that he was several kinds of fool, and his footfalls echoed sharply down the stairs. Ellery's smile broadened to a laugh. Then he tore open the envelope and removed the enclosure.

"My robe is rent, my staff is broken, my begging bowl is in flinders," was the astonishing beginning of the missive. Ellery read on, bewildered. "I thought I had the Possessive Pronouns lashed to the mast, and, lo and behold! one has arisen and knocked me flat. I have found out something—I've been finding it out for some time. Love is no philosopher. Love won't tolerate *a* or *the* Public. Love insists on that awful possessive 'mine.' Oh, my pupil! I'm about to do a Lochinvar! I am about to beat it with the loveliest girl in the world—because I couldn't and can't stand her belonging to any one but me. Oh, what a fall is here, my countryman! And while on the subject, I have guessed something that makes me feel that you will sympathize. Work also says 'Mine.' My love is mine, your work is yours. All hail the possessive pronouns! When I return I hope I shall have acquired a measure of sanity—no, I don't—for, she's mine, mine, *mine!*"

The signature was an inspired sketch of a little dancing faun.

Ellery's eyes were very tender—then they glowed with a deep inner light. Involuntarily his hands reached out till his fingers touched the piled manuscript.

"Mine!" he murmured.

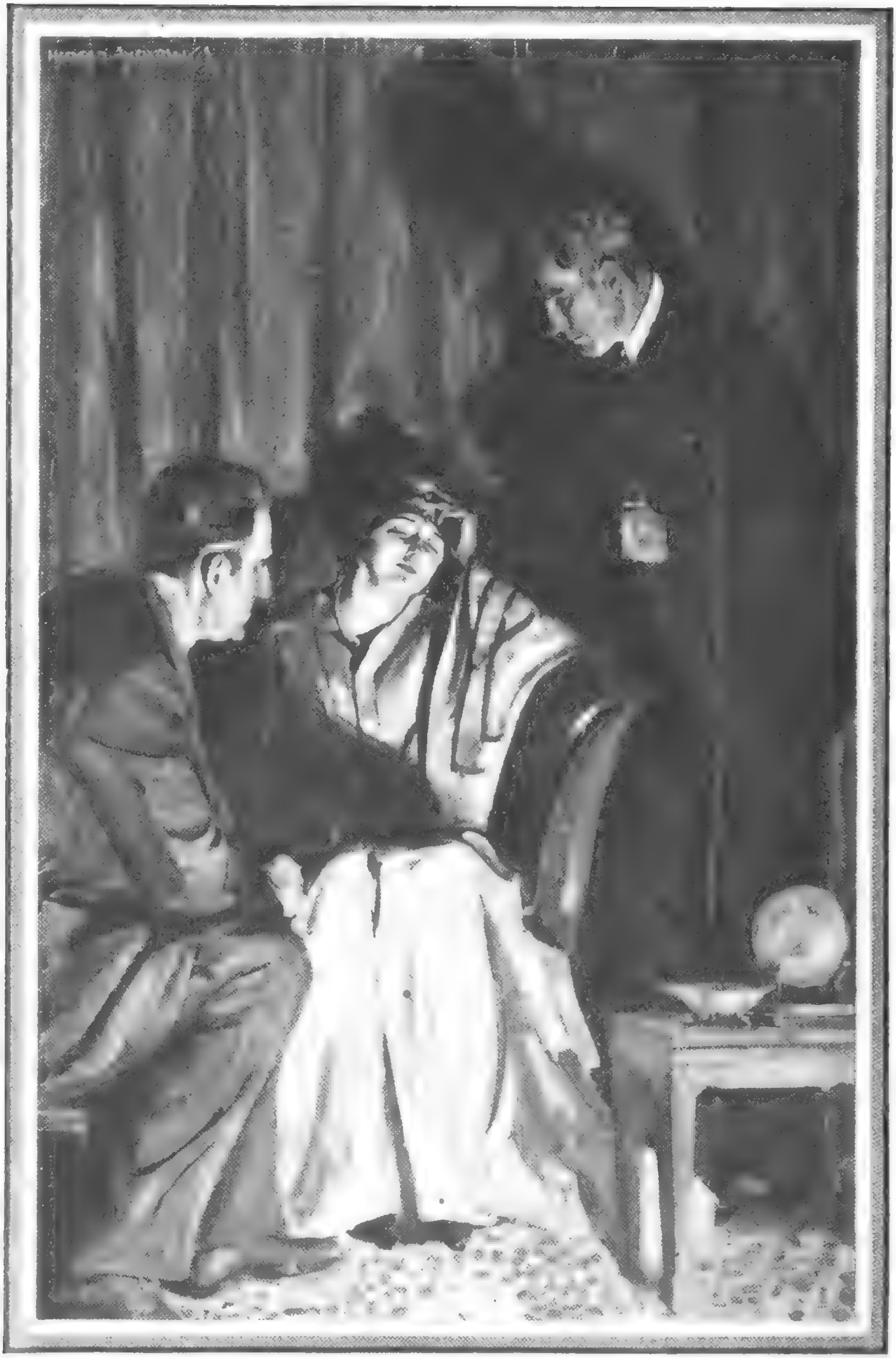
Geraniums

By Theodosia Garrison

OF ALL the flowers East and West
I like geraniums the best.
In gingham gowns they seem to dress,
Yet lose no whit of comeliness.
Of wholesome things they make one think—
Of apples and new milk to drink,
And pleasant neighbors met to talk
About the porch and garden walk,
And Joan and Darby, smiling still
At posies on their window-sill.
They are as commonplace and right
As books and tea and candle-light.
And all about them is the scent
Of home and comfort and content.
Roses and romance have their place,
But here's an old friend's honest face.
And who would trade so good a thing
For all the brief coquettes of spring?

Of all the flowers East and West
I like geraniums the best.

Everybody's Magazine, February, 1924



"I see—a hand—a pretty hand—fingering this bill! . . . There are many other bills—oh, so many!—like this." She hesitated, as if seeking to penetrate mists.

A Craig Kennedy Story

Counterfeit Beauty

A Gang of Bootleggers Branches Out into Counterfeiting—of Living Girl Faces as Well as Twenty-Dollar Bills

By Arthur B. Reeve

Illustration by Harold Anderson

"KENNEDY, did you ever hear of counterfeit beauty—girls who can change their faces, make them just like this thing—spurious?"

Haley of the Secret Service laid down a new counterfeit twenty-dollar bill before Craig and with it the printed description: "The bill is drawn on the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, California, check letter 'C,' plate No. 55, Carter Glass, Secretary of the Treasury, John Burke, Treasurer of the United States, portrait of Cleveland. This is a photographic production on two pieces of paper between which silk threads have been distributed. The specimen bears No. L708958A."

"What do you mean—girls?" I asked as Kennedy studied the counterfeit.

"Shovers, passers," replied Haley, selecting another from a sheaf of papers in his pocket. "Times change. But the forms of various swindles change only enough to keep abreast with them. Read this circular letter."

It was after the old "green goods" form. Only now it started in capital letters: "MILLIONS OF THE WORLD'S GOLD LIE IDLE IN THE UNITED STATES TREASURY!"

Enclosed with it was the reproduction of a newspaper clipping telling of the theft of plates for U. S. gold certificates. Another clipping told about the theft of bond paper and ink.

"Why should you not profit with others by the circulation of GENUINE U. S. NOTES, in reality drawn against these idle millions?"

It wound up by telling how to get in touch with the makers of these "genuine U. S. notes" by writing care of General Delivery.

"You'll find all the old games going on now just the same," remarked Kennedy, "the Spanish prisoner, all the old-time swindles—modernized just enough to catch a tenth of one per cent of those born every minute!"

"Same game." Haley shook his head. "But the rules have changed. It took a long time for one of our operatives to get in touch, even through 'General Delivery.' And when he did, he got bunked. All he had was some more of this stuff—and a friendship for a mighty pretty little flapper, Alma Carberry—no, the recollection of a friendship. The flapper was gone! Still," he went on, "that's ordinary. Here's the amazing part, at least to me. I did something I never did before—and I'm mystified by it. Did you ever hear of the psychometrist, Santella? I suppose you know what psychometry is?"

"Psychometry?" repeated Craig. "I would say that it is the name for a process by which information is supposed to be supernormally obtained through the handling of inanimate objects."

"That's it. Now, for example, suppose

a diamond, like the Hope diamond, has been associated with some tragic occurrence. If that jewel is placed in the hand of some one who has this 'gift,' that person may be given a mental vision, so to speak, of the tragedy. Or suppose that a person is missing. If you take to a psychometrist some article that belonged to the missing person, there may be revealed exactly where that person is, alive or dead."

Kennedy nodded. "It sounds incredible, of course. Yet the fact is that the records of psychical research teem with instances in which it would seem that psychometry was demonstrated. Again and again there have been narrated cases of psychometrists handling jewels, coins, trinkets, articles of clothing, all sorts of things and then locating lost persons or things, or relating incidents about which they could hardly have gained knowledge by ordinary means."

"Yes. No one in our service ever tried it before as far as I know," resumed Haley. "But I thought, if they can do those things with jewels and coins and handkerchiefs and keys, why not with counterfeit paper money?"

Haley paused. The dilemma was unanswerable without denying the premises.

"Well, I went to Santella, in her studio on Sheridan Square. Santella held the bill in her hands, went into what you might call a trance, or a state of clairvoyance, or something. 'I see a beauty parlor,' she said, 'a girl—young—she looks about twenty-two or -three—dark hair, eyes blue. . . .' 'What's her name?' I asked. 'Can you get that, too?' She tried. 'Yes; her name is Alma—Alma Carberry.' 'And the place?' I questioned. 'Yes; it is the shop of Marie Le Brun, the Beauty Builder!' "

"And?" prompted Craig.

"Then I went there, to this Beauty Builder. There *is* such a girl. She had been there—once. Never came again. Kennedy, that's wonderful! That girl, a girl of that name and of that exact description, was known to us as their best 'shover' of the 'queer.' We had traced her, as I told you, lost her, now picked her up here—and then not another trace of her. I tell you, this is one of the cleverest gangs I have ever been up against. They can take a girl, doll her up, make a passer out of her—and, presto!—she's dropped out—like that!" Haley snapped his fingers. "Now, what I want you to do is to take this Mademoiselle Marie, the Beauty Builder, give her a shot of scopolamin—you know, this 'truth drug' that I've been reading about——"

Kennedy frowned and shook his head, but Haley insisted. "You know, you're converting us fellows to use science in detecting crime. Now, come on. You've got to help me put this thing over."

KENNEDY was skeptical, but for personal reasons finally consented to go with Haley. He paused only long enough to take a little packet from the cabinet in the laboratory and we were on our way to Marie Le Brun's place on Eighth Street, just off Fifth Avenue.

I surveyed the outside of the beauty builder's with interest. Nothing that pertains to the eternal feminine lacks interest. The house itself in its original glory had been the home of some founder of a millionaire line, although that was many years ago. The high stoop had disappeared. In its place was a beautifully arched window with many small panes and an English basement entrance. Many beauty shops simulate the Colonial, though why I could never guess. I cannot imagine the demure misses of those times having eyebrows plucked or noses filled out with paraffin to make them a purer type.

With its white paint, red bricks, and pea-green shutters it looked promising. In the entrance hall we discovered that the beauty shop itself was two flights up. We climbed.

At the door we stopped suddenly. Sounds of voices in altercation were heard. One man seemed to be nourishing a grievance that aroused another to a furious state. There were exclamations of alarm from a woman.

"Don't, Tony! Stop! You'll have people here in a minute! . . . Blanche—do something! Oh, my God! The police will be here in a minute! What's the matter with you crazy men?"

"Tony! Tony! Don't do anything foolish." This time a younger voice spoke. In spite of the tense excitement it still was musical. There was a persuasive quality about it that meant power where men were concerned.

"Tony Tellini!" whispered Haley. "A suspect."

"Who's the other chap?" I whispered back.

Haley shrugged.

"Cut that stuff out, Blanche! Vic may be a lawyer but he ain't goner tell me what I can do with you or any other woman, see?"

Haley looked up quickly on our side of the door. "Vic McGraw, of the Broadway and Forty-second Street Bar Association, as the newspapers call it," he whispered. "Clever young attorney. I believe McGraw's the mouthpiece of the gang."

I had heard of Victor McGraw, police-court lawyer or a little better, a mighty clever young chap whose business seemed to be in finding holes in the law through which he could drag his clients to safety. I had heard of him through his demi-monde clientele. He had had a long education in the office of some bucket-shop lawyers but was now out for himself and very ambitious.

There was the sound of a blow and some one stumbling back, overturning furniture, and the cry of a woman, through the transom.

Kennedy waited for no more. With our combined strength we forced the bolted door. The sound of the metal splintering the wood diverted the attention of those in the room.

It was a wild group. Over in a corner toward which he had stumbled back leaned a tall, dark fellow of unusual attractiveness of face and figure. He was leaning with one arm behind him, his head and shoulders against the coats hanging on the wall. A beautiful girl with a wealth of golden hair was watching him furtively. This must have been Blanche. Standing behind her and to one side was another man slightly older than the chap in the corner. He scowled at his opponent, both clenched fists crooked before him. The other woman was pacing the floor in angry agitation. One needed not to be told that this was Mademoiselle Marie.

Suddenly, before we could speak, the man in the corner pulled his hand from the coats behind him.

"This speaks for Tony!"

There was the crack of a gat, a quick flash of fire. He had aimed directly at McGraw.

For the instant I was stupefied. I expected to see the lawyer fall.

Nothing happened.

There was a quick shift of positions. McGraw was unarmed and, it seemed, in a precarious position. Suddenly Marie Le Brun started across the room toward Tony as if to avert more shooting. Kennedy reached out quickly and pulled her back from Tellini, whose handsome face was now clouded with combat and jealousy.

A second shot, point-blank, rang out. Marie fainted in Craig's arms. I looked. Again the shot was harmless.

Craig hastily carried the unconscious little beauty-maker to a luxurious day bed in the next room. Haley took a step toward Tony.

"No more shooting, see? We came for a manicure—not a murder!"

Tony was angry. He broke the gun, scattering the shells on the floor. "Blanks!" he muttered. "Who did that?" Then, as he looked up, he must have recognized Haley for the first time, as the man who had been to the beauty builder's before, inquiring for Alma Carberry. He made a sudden dash, down a private hall, to the head of the stairs and out.

Craig, giving orders fast now, nodded to let him go for the present. "McGraw, go get a doctor. Mademoiselle needs immediate attention. Blanche, does Mademoiselle sleep here?"

The girl nodded as her eyes followed McGraw out of the room.

"Then fix up her room so we can get her there before the doctor arrives."

Kennedy was leaning over Marie Le Brun. Gently he lifted her eyelids and looked at the pupils, felt her pulse, listened to her heart. Blanche left the room slowly, looking back. Craig seemed to have eyes in the back of his head, to know when she was gone.

"TELL us, Marie," he whispered firmly in her ear. "What were you talking about before the fight started?"

The woman seemed restless. Her lips moved. Her arms were never still.

"Tell us, Marie."

Random words seemed to come from her lips. Suddenly she was laughing hysterically.

"Vic! You are a croaker! . . . Tony, everything makes you thirsty!"

There was another burst of hysterical laughter.

"Oh, they have everything there—labels, caps, bond labels, revenue stamps; everything, I say."

Haley raised his eyebrows an inch at the mention of revenue stamps, and leaned forward.

"Where?" demanded Kennedy firmly.

"Lexington Avenue."

She murmured the number as Craig urged. "What floor?"

"Suite 601."

Blanche could be heard running down the stairs. Her excitement and exertion had flushed her cheeks. Her eyes were a sparkling blue and her slender figure seemed scarcely to touch the steps or the floor.

"It's all ready."

Craig and I carried Marie to her room and Blanche soon made her comfortable. She was coming out of it. A bell sounded below.

"There's the doctor."

Kennedy caught Blanche's wrist, held it, looked her in the unwinking eyes.

"It was lucky for McGraw those were blanks instead of bullets," he said tensely. "There would have been a doctor for two!"

"Yes." She did not move an eyelash.

"You put those blanks in place of the real ones, didn't you?"

She hesitated a fraction of a second. "Yes. I knew Tony's temper. I didn't want any one—hurt."

Haley had come in with the doctor. "You gave McGraw a splendid chance for a get-away," he whispered to Kennedy.

"That's all right—now."

Kennedy spoke aside and under his breath to the doctor and I saw the doctor shoot a quick look at Craig, then smile with a sort of respectful politeness as he nodded. Craig motioned to us to follow and we left the room.

"Well, that was easy; we didn't even need the scopolamin test on Mademoiselle, did we?" laughed Haley, outside on the street. "She rambled, talked enough without it. I got you. You wanted to get away on that lead, didn't you? Don't you think we'd have got more with the scopolamin?"

"You had it!"

"Had it? How?"

"That woman isn't the kind that faints. She didn't faint. When I stopped her, I broke a little ampule of amyl nitrite under her nose. Pouf! Out! Just for half a minute or so. Then I jabbed her with the scopolamin needle. You never even saw it!"

"Well, I'll be blowed!" ejaculated Haley.

With high hopes of Haley that it might lead to the elusive Alma Carberry, we followed the scopolamin revelation to the Lexington Avenue address.

There was a surprise at the very start when we read the sign on the door of Suite 601: "The Matrimonial Journal." Could it be one of those correspondence marriage papers? We entered. Girls, ten or a dozen of them, were all busy sending out sealed circulars.

Haley unceremoniously seized one, a sealed blank envelope. The girls had been addressing envelopes from a list, not knowing what was contained in the enclosed plain cover. Haley tore the thing open. It was headed "New Confidential List to Agents." It was a price list of whiskies, wines and liquors! The sign on the door was merely a cover.

Our friend of the Secret Service was resourceful. It was only a matter of minutes to arrange a search on a John Doe warrant, already prepared—a little extra-legal, perhaps, but what is that among reformers?

WE UNEARTHED thousands of circulars offering whiskies for cutting, rye, Scotch, Bourbon, gin, brandy, grain alcohol, 192 proof at twelve dollars a gallon, 190 proof at ten dollars. There was not a drop of anything here. But Haley was keen on another offer of every kind of whisky label at various prices in dozen lots and the further offer to make labels of any brand desired. More interesting yet was the offer of Government bonding labels and revenue strip stamps, even doctors' prescription books with serial numbers for any district.

Everything was carried out so quietly and efficiently that even the manager, a man named Stein, presumably also the owner, was put under arrest.

Perhaps it had something to do with counterfeiting. The labels and stamps would indicate it. But, after all, we were rambling on the rambling talk of Mademoiselle Marie, and I said so. The truth-drug had taken us far afield. Haley was chagrined. Craig, I think, was secretly pleased.

But that was nothing to the jolt that

came to Haley when he reported to his downtown office in the Customs House. He turned to us, staring through perspiration, as he hung up the receiver.

"ANOTHER squeal!" he ejaculated. "A new girl has appeared, with a new bill, a hundred-dollar bill! This time it's no crude photographic stunt. It's printed, from plates, on mighty good bond paper. It's true the plates are made by the photo-engraving process. But this is dangerous. They're getting better. It will fool any but an expert, easily take in people not accustomed to look to the genuineness of a bill. And there's this new girl—a Colleen Collins—a henna beauty! Through her they've put over a deal on some come-ons who've been picked up. It must have netted the gang a hundred thousand. They sold a bale of it, half a million or more. It all started, according to the squeal, with a little party at a place called the Social Club on Vandam Street. There! You see? That's just another of those things no one ever figured on with prohibition!"

Kennedy shook his head as he thought back on the apparent fiasco we had just been through. "That thing was just what I was afraid of," he frowned; "something rambling, hazy, inconsequential, off on a tangent. Otherwise, scopolamin would be our great little scientific third degree. No, now we'll have to go back and start all over again. The real question is: Who is the head of this counterfeit gang? Here's this new counterfeit, too. Get one. Take it to Santella. See what we get this time."

Craig always enjoyed visits to spiritist sirens. Of a scientific turn of mind, all his ideas were those of exactness. He enjoyed his skepticism as another would enjoy a drama or a game of golf.

There were at least two rooms in the Occult Studio in Sheridan Square, one a sort of reception room, the other for consultation. Both were impressionistic. About the walls were hung orange draperies with mystic, cabalistic figures bordering them, applied by a batik dyeing method. The floor was painted an orange, too, with a border in stencil design of the same figures. It was hard to tell where the side walls began and the floor ended. To make it more amazing the ceiling was entirely covered with a mirror whose reflection left me dizzy. When I looked up I unconsciously stepped high, to avoid myself, I suppose.

A little East Indian also gowned in orange admitted us. A moment and Santella herself came to the communicating doors. Through the portières she gave Haley a cordial smile of inquiry.

"Was what I told you good?"

Santella was young and pretty, of the Latin type, big brown eyes that sparkled or melted passionately with her varying emotions, an olive skin with the glow of youth, white, even teeth that showed with every smile behind lips a bit too thick. She was a trifle heavier than the lissome demand of the day. But as she walked the movement of her fully rounded hips suggested the grace and sinuousness of the tigress.

"Yes. What you told me was good. Only the girl has just simply disappeared—dropped out. These friends of mine here are greatly impressed by psychometry, Santella, and I brought them with me. I have another little job for you, much like the other." Haley was fingering his wallet for the sample hundred-dollar counterfeit. "What do you think of psychommetry?" he asked, turning to Kennedy, who had been introduced under another name.

"Well, many psychic researchers say that the evidence of psychometry is so impressive that they can no longer be skeptical. But there is a great difference of opinion among them as to the explanation. Some insist that the object held in the hand is veritably the agent by which the knowledge is conveyed."

"That's my belief," asserted Santella.

Kennedy nodded. "Of course that assumes that the inanimate is capable of receiving, retaining, and projecting all sorts of psychic images. The other school holds that such an idea is too startling, that it challenges belief. They believe in psychometry, but in their explanation they reduce it to 'tapping' of other people's thoughts, a sort of telepathy."

"Yes," put in Haley. "But Santella says psychometry often gives information that no living person could know—for instance the whereabouts of some one who has wandered off and died in solitude. What about telepathy then? She says at least it must be a species of clairvoyance or the intervention of some spirit. She

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prefers the inanimate theory—don't you, Santella?"

Santella smiled and nodded. "I believe that by it I shall soon be in communication with Mars. You know, years ago, we thought that animals and plants were the only things that lived. But now we know there is life in everything. I have never yet seen anything which is not alive. A small difference in our physical make-up would revolutionize our world and ideas of living. And in the case of Mars, of course, it is ridiculous to think that the life of the Martians is similar to ours. I don't believe they are more advanced than us earthlings, either. If they were they would have found some means before this of communicating with us."

"Perhaps psychometry is that means," suggested Craig at random.

Santella looked at him long and earnestly. "I hadn't looked at it in that light. Sometimes to some of us the obvious isn't as apparent as it is to those a little way off. We don't see the forest for the trees!"

"THAT'S all mighty interesting," put in Haley. "But now, taking this hundred-dollar bill, what do you find, Santella?"

The girl leaned back among the pillows of a broad divan not high from the floor. She closed her eyes, sighed several times. Across her forehead she placed the bill. Lying very quietly she seemed to concentrate.

"I see—a hand—a pretty hand—fingering this bill!" She paused. Haley leaned forward breathlessly. There was no doubt that Haley believed it. "There are many other bills, so many—oh, so many—like this." She stopped, hesitating, as if seeking to penetrate the mists that were occluded from our vision.

"On the middle finger is a ring—a strange ring—a topaz in an antique setting. . . . The hand is a girl's hand. . . . She is Titian-haired, with sparkling blue eyes."

"And her name?" broke in Haley breathlessly, awed.

"Her name? . . . Colleen Collins."

Haley shot a mystified glance at us.

"Santella," suggested Kennedy, "are you able to tell where she is?"

A longer wait intervened. In the next room we could hear the jangling of the telephone. The turbaned attendant answered: "But Santella is busy. She is communicating." It seemed his asperity was aroused at the persistence. "Hold the wire, then!"

Craig exchanged a quick glance with me. I knew what he meant. Quietly I slipped out of the room and the house. Santella's studio was next to the corner drug-store. I entered the booth, and quickly managed to get to the right telephone authority, to get what I wanted. The call was from Greenwich Street, Malobar's, a restaurant, well known to visitors.

"A big room, many lights, many people, some dancing, some dining, some drinking. The girl dances. . . ."

It was fortunate I could act quickly. The impatience of the caller caused the bell to jangle again. Santella heard it, broke off her revelation, answered the call in monosyllables. Listening in was beyond my ability to accomplish. But I had found where the call came from, although in the studio as she returned from the telephone to Craig and Haley, Santella complained of being unable to "see" anything further as she held the counterfeit note.

"Our leads are all wrong!" I exclaimed as I met Craig and Haley on the street afterward. "Somehow I had a feeling when I located that telephone call it would be that Social Club on Vandam Street. I'm disappointed."

"But," considered Kennedy, "I'm quite certain it is just around the corner from Malobar's. There might be something in that. We couldn't get into the Social Club anyhow. We can get into Malobar's."

"I'm for going to Malobar's," nodded Haley.

Craig shook his head. "Not you, Haley. They know you too well. I suspect they know us, too, by this time. It's a clever gang. No, Walter and I will have to go, disguised, too—as a couple of bearded Texas ranch owners floating in a sea of oil. We'll act as if we were on to New York for a good time."

Haley's face fell.

"Besides," added Kennedy, "you'll do better if you're at your uptown office with a half dozen of your men on call. We might need you, if we ever get to crash that Club."

Much as Kennedy disliked the idea, he was a scientific adept at the art of disguise.

He spent a good part of the evening making himself and me up and practising the parts we had assumed

IT WAS nearly eleven o'clock when we entered Malobar's. The place was crowded with pleasure seekers from uptown and out of town. Malobar's had formerly been a spaghetti and red-ink joint with a cheap patronage. The war, the boom after it, the general cult of Greenwich Village and finally the growth of the smart speak-easy had inspired Malobar to change the tone of the place. Coarseness gave way to queerness. It was unique. Good food under bizarre surroundings brought hosts of patrons and much profit. For the blasé New Yorker delights in being bunked and Malobar was a genius, a Bohemian bunker.

It seemed as if, even at that hour, all the tables were taken. We circulated about the dining-room with its odd angles, looking for places, but really with our eyes on the people.

We had scarcely got in before we spied one person that we knew, Blanche of the beauty-builder shop, among the dancers and diners. She was radiant in an evening gown of brilliant blue that accentuated her extreme blondness and the corn-flower blue of her eyes. Her hair was curly and uncontrolled. It persisted in peeping out in tiny curls about the nape of her neck and little shell-like ears. Her eyes may have been blue but they were not gentle. They were the sparkling, adventure-loving eyes of a restless personality. Slender, light on her feet, she seemed to be everywhere, bubbling over with vivacity.

As we watched her she was joined by the proprietor, Malobar himself. Malobar seemed displeased at something and jerked his head toward the far corner of an angle of the room. From where we were we could see four men, a large table. There were Tony Tellini, McGraw, and two others. I don't know about the other two but I fancied Tony and Vic were not at ease, that the old feud was smoldering. There was nothing to wonder at in that.

Old Malobar was a wizened, bent old man with a club foot. His skin showed the pallor of poor health often seen in cripples. His eyes were bright, small, round, almost of a piercing blackness. He carried a cane, too, and emphasized his remarks to Blanche with a quick and vigorous pounding of the stick. The girl seemed concerned and anxious to please.

"Leave it to me; leave it to me," she repeated. "I'll do it. Don't get angry. Leave it to me."

Malobar disappeared, his lips still moving in an inaudible mutter and his covert glance still over at that table in the corner.

"That girl's the hostess here," commented Craig. "See how the little assistant to the beauty builder mingles with the guests? Besides, there's the beauty builder herself and our friend."

I followed his glance to another table near the small dance floor. There were Marie LeBrun and Santella. They were chatting merrily and, I fancied, drinking with two men. All seemed to know the waiters, to be habitués of the place.

Blanche stopped to speak to them. As one of them joked with her, I thought I saw a bitterness creep over Santella's rather beautiful face. It seemed to me her eyes were pools of malice. Blanche saw it and it amused her. Somehow I thought that she enjoyed the animosity she aroused, that she was baiting Santella.

"If they're in it, it will be wonderful," was Craig's remark as we passed out of earshot, still hunting a table. "Some one will spill the beans."

It seemed irresistible to saunter over in the direction of Tony and Vic McGraw. I suppose we did look anxious. More people were coming in; no one was leaving; our chances of getting placed were slender.

Kennedy paused by the large table. "No tables here. We'll have to go somewhere else, partner."

IT NEEDED no very keen observer to see that all four had been drinking considerably and that the bootleg had affected them differently. Tony was fiery, ardent; McGraw taciturn. Next to him was the stranger, who was silent and saturnine, also. But on Tony's side nearest us was one who had mounted into joviality. It was he who overheard Kennedy's somewhat disgruntled remark.

The jovial stranger turned and laughed. "Look here! A couple of cowboys! Come on in—the water's fine!" He accompanied it with a laugh that the others joined in weakly. I thought, how prohibition had dulled what once was humor. Perhaps the others didn't appreciate the joke, knowing that the stuff had not been cut with water. His companion nudged him, tried to divert him, but Craig had his eye and it wasn't many seconds before we were seated. "Let's make it a regular party. I'm going to meet a queen—red—er—auburn—hair—um! peaches and cream—and eyes—oh, boy!"

It was hard to tell how Tony and Vic felt about us, but at least they were polite. They smiled at the fellow's rapture.

Craig showed interest. "Seem to be a lot of good lookers here," he said, nodding toward Blanche, who seemed headed our way.

Vic and Tony exchanged sharp glances. Kennedy ordered, engaged in a friendly argument with our host who demanded, "Let *me* buy!" matched and lost, flashed what looked like a huge roll of bills and paid with a generous tip. The two were getting along famously. It wasn't long before the jovial one confided that he had recently fallen heir to a sizable estate which he expected to run up into more.

All the time Malobar hovered about eying everybody narrowly. He seemed always afraid of revenue agents. Fortune had favored him as a result of his eternal vigilance. He had spotted many; there had been violations and fines imposed, but so far no padlock on the door.

Kennedy and the stranger were rapidly approaching the confidential stage, Kennedy crying over the oil business and praying for some new get-rich-quick industry.

"You're good fellow, good fellow. Maybe I c'n let you in on something big, to-morrow. Call me." They exchanged cards.

Tony smashed a glass just then and the confidences were interrupted. I had been watching Tony Tellini. He was a handsome young devil, but really, I suspected, Tony was a graduate of the "Hudson Dusters" or some such West Side gang.

Blanche flitted past. It was enough to fire the conflict of Tony and McGraw over her. It was more than fancy that Tony seemed to fascinate Blanche with the fascination of the "bad man" for the adventurous type of girl.

"I'm going, Tony," remarked McGraw, rising.

"Where?" demanded Tony sharply.

McGraw did not answer; just laughed. "Wait for me—later?" McGraw, on his feet, called to Blanche, now a couple of tables away.

Tony reached up to pull McGraw down. "Nothing doing!"

"Say, children, don't fight," smoothed the bibulous one. "I ain't so tight about my red—you know—auburn-haired girl. I'll introduce you when she comes in. She's taking me to the Social Club. Maybe she's got some friends there. Don't fight."

Tony and Vic exchanged another quick glance.

"Shut up!" This was the stranger's friend. "You're girl-crazy, John. They always get a fellow in trouble."

"Not much!" The stranger was holding his glass. "To my red—you know—auburn, Titian, henna, whatever it is—girl. She'll keep me out of trouble!"

I was busy thinking. Was another green-goods deal to be put over in the small hours of the night? In this case the deal was likely to be finished at the Social Club, where the other deal had started. How much was involved in it? Above all who was the head of it all, putting it over?

McGraw had left Malobar's, alone, by this time. I got up on some excuse to follow Marie LeBrun and Blanche, who were in the lobby near the street entrance, apparently going out. Even at a distance one could see that Santella was very jealous of this girl and Tony Tellini. She never had her eyes off them, long. As for Tony, I wondered whether he cared for any girl—much—or long. Marie and Blanche went out at last.

It was getting late, after two o'clock. Malobar came over. "Gentlemen, it is closing time. You will have to clear out. I don't want the police!" And his cane pounded the floor.

No one seemed to take the hint. Tony left for a few minutes but it was not to go. I knew it was a hint to us to leave. As for him, he could not leave his prospects.

MALOBAR came to the table again. "You fellows here yet? Do you want to get me pinched?"

Still no one moved. Suddenly I was aware that Marie had returned. I could swear she had not entered by the street door. I had watched it carefully.

"She must have come through the kitchen and service way," whispered Craig. "There must be a secret connection with the Social Club. I'll be right back."

Kennedy was not long in the telephone booth. "I've told Haley," he whispered again under the hubbub of closing. "He's taking three men with him to cover the street, sending a couple here for us."

TONY was still away as Santella and Marie sauntered over and sat down with us. Santella was soon raving to Craig about Texas. Marie turned her charms on me. She was pretty with a saucy, piquant beauty but I felt that a little of her went a long way.

I saw a couple of strangers come in and sit down. The waiters were not very cordial but they got away with it. Tony was back now, rather quiet. He wanted to separate us.

"We're going now, fellows," he suggested.

"Aw, no! Not yet. I want my girl, my little redhead." The loquacious one refused to move.

A waiter came up with a message. Tony took it, then handed it to the objecter, who squinted as he read: "Can't make Malobar's to-night. Come over to my apartment. Tony will show you the way. Colleen."

I felt that this was cleverly staged. The man rose, making a solemn adieu to us. "I like 'partments—red-haired 'partments! Introduce you to-morrow. S'long, neighbor."

Marie was vamping me with a talent I had never seen surpassed. Santella's gaze was riveted on Kennedy's face as if she would read his very soul. Kennedy let the others go. I saw he did not wish to crab the act. It was better to get into the club with the deal on.

Malobar's patience was giving out entirely. He brought us a big check. Kennedy peeled off a bill to pay it. He was holding it in his hands when Santella grabbed it. She leaned back in the chair, closed her eyes, placed the bill on her white forehead.

"I see men," came her low musical voice. "I don't think they are friends. Three of them. I am sure one is a bull. His name is Haley." I watched her keenly. Had psychometry penetrated our disguise? "He is not with the other two now. The other two—they are—these men!"

Malobar had raised his thick stick and was bringing it down on Kennedy's head when I put out my arm, diverted the blow and it glanced off on Santella sharply enough to make her realize that she had started something she couldn't finish.

It was a signal to the waiters. But it was also a signal to Haley's men. One jumped to the street door, blowing a police whistle, jammed it shut, stood over it with a gun. The other hurled himself toward us. Instantly the fight developed into a mêlée. No one could get out. Slowly we milled our way back to the kitchen. The lights went out.

"Keep close to me," muttered Kennedy. "Here it is. We have them like rats in a trap!"

I marveled at his optimism. I felt that it was we who were trapped. I don't object so much to fighting in the open. But when I found myself in a dark narrow passage I felt very much in a trap.

Kennedy had been right. The Social Club backed up against Malobar's, making an ell between the Greenwich Street joint and the old two-story-and-attic brick house on Vandam Street. We shoved through the dank passage, groping to a door.

Craig pushed it open cautiously just a bit. Sounds of a terrific struggle came from the other side. I caught a glimpse of a girl fleeing up the stairs. "Look! The girl with the henna hair—Colleen Collins!" I exclaimed.

Haley and his men seemed to be all over the narrow place. One of them was having a stiff battle near the door with McGraw and the gloomy friend. The happy one had passed away entirely. In the other corner Haley and Tony were struggling on the floor. Everywhere tables and chairs were overturned. We could hear noises of some one banging in the cellar.

I started for Haley and Tony, when Craig pulled me back. They had been struggling for Haley's gun. Tony had succeeded in loosening Haley's hold and it had fallen on the floor. Tony rolled over, grabbed it. Instantly the two were on their feet. Tony, with Haley covered, was backing away from him, toward us in the narrow entrance that led to Malobar's.

Just then a voice from the cellar called up. "Something more than hooch and a still down here! Come, the first chance you get. You ought to see the press, the paper, the ink and the dies. A lot of bills, hardly dry yet, too!"

Here was the counterfeit plant that would make this a big haul for Haley.

Tony had backed very close to us now. He had only a few more steps to take. He put his left hand back to grasp the knob of the door. "Don't move, Haley, or I'll make a sieve of you!"

CRAIG moved forward just a few inches until Tony felt the jam of his gun under his left shoulder. "Drop that gat—and up with your hands—quick!" I seized the gun from the floor as Haley slipped the bracelets on Tony. The outside man on the street had just come to the aid of the operative by the door. It was now two to two and they had McGraw and his companion pinioned.

A terrific explosion rocked the rickety ancient house. It seemed to come from the cellar. The walls seemed to totter. The chimney collapsed. Ceilings crashed here and there in clouds of dust. Glass had shattered in every window. Doors hung half unhinged. There was an ominous silence from the man in the cellar.

Through the plaster dust, I saw McGraw with a gash on his head break away from his captors. There was not a chance to get away on the street even though part of the front of the little house was blown out. We blocked the secret exit with Tony handcuffed. McGraw leaped up the stairs. Kennedy and I followed, behind us trailing Haley with the unwilling, surly Tellini.

It seemed that the rooms on the second floor must have been rented furnished. In the corner we came upon McGraw bending over the henna-haired girl. She was very white and unconscious.

"I had to find her. She's stunned!"

"Who is she, McGraw?" I asked.

"My girl," he said simply.

Kennedy bent over, felt her pulse, started to minister to her. "That henna hair was a wig," he remarked, pointing. "Her hair was golden underneath. Why did she wear that, McGraw?"

"To protect herself. The bulls were on to her. Marie LeBrun touched up her cheeks and lips, put that wig on her. In a new gown you wouldn't have known who she was."

Kennedy nodded. "Colleen Collins is Blanche, then? Marie fixes her up differently after each big counterfeit deal?"

I marveled at the audacity of it. "Is Blanche Alma Carberry, too?" I asked.

"All the same girl," interposed Kennedy before even McGraw could answer. "Didn't you know Blanche was Colleen? Have you forgotten that Santella told us Colleen wore a topaz ring in an antique setting? I saw it first on Blanche's hand when we were caring for Marie LeBrun at the beauty parlor this afternoon. I saw it again at Malobar's to-night. Here it is." He had taken her hand, gently chafing it.

McGraw was plainly worried over Blanche, more than over his own predicament.

"I knew it would come! I thought there'd be something like this. I tried to save her from it. I was never really in it and I'd have been out long ago; but I couldn't leave Blanche."

"This counterfeit beauty is the work of Marie LeBrun, beauty builder?" demanded Craig. "How?"

"Oh, Marie is a wonder. She's the daughter of a scientific face surgeon in Paris, knows how to make a light criminal dark with henna baths—all about face lifts, eyes, hair, fingers, nose, teeth, even build and how you carry yourself, everything that identifies a woman!"

My mind worked quickly as I ran over the events of the day. Marie had left Malobar's really to fix up Blanche as Colleen. I saw it all from the fight between Tony and McGraw in the shop of the beauty builder. They had known that Blanche was Colleen, Alma.

There was an interruption at the door as Kennedy dragged a mattress off a splintered bed and laid Blanche on it. It was Haley with the handcuffed Tony. "Wanted to be sure you had him, all right," explained Haley.

Tony was silent, sullen. Nor was there apparent a trace of compassion on his face for Blanche. He was totally unconcerned.

Downstairs we could hear a high-pitched angry argument of a woman. "Where have they taken him—my Tony?" It was Santella. Her voice rose to a scream. "Let me get to him. I will—I will get to him!"

There was a scuffling of feet, a sharp cry of pain and Santella, breathless, pale, broke away and ran up the shaky stairs. Before any one could stop her she had flung her arms about Tony's neck and was kissing him.

"Tony—Tony—not hurt!" She faced the rest of us defiantly.

Kennedy caught her wrist. "What part did you play in this, young lady?" he demanded sternly.

Before she could answer Tony spoke up. "I just met her at Malobar's. We were good friends. Santella's not in it—just crazy over me."

He seemed to say it with a bit of vanity. It may have been characteristic and ill-becoming. But Santella did not deny it. Rather she seemed to glory in it.

I saw the psychometrist trying to get from Haley anything that would make for the safety of Tony. And at the same time I saw her with a consuming fiery jealousy of all the other girls that Tony even looked at. It told why she had given Haley what she had at the start, why she had shut up when she returned from the telephone in her apartment. In Malobar's just now her keen wit and observation had seen new danger for Tony. And that was really all she had seen, ever—danger to Tony.

BLANCHE was stirring on the mattress pallet on the floor. Even then, there shone through Santella's face, her utter bitterness to Blanche. There was nothing her fiery nature would not dare to remove that rival for Tony.

I wondered about Blanche as McGraw bent over her. I saw her as one of those who would never admit that any other woman could best her. She might not want the man. But no woman had the power to defy her, take away from her even the man she did not want.

Her eyelids fluttered. McGraw's face lighted up. A moment and she opened her eyes wide, tried to rise, and sank back.

"What was it, Vic?" She held his hand now. "What put me out?"

"There was a bomb, down in the cellar. The plaster hit you. You were lucky. Keep still. You'll be all right."

I saw McGraw now the real lover. Had he been in it merely to righteously cheat the law, if he could save Blanche from herself? I recalled what he had said. Did the gang really fear him? His keen mind had penetrated the activities of Marie. Then I thought of the Lexington Avenue bootleggers, rivals of Tony in his trade, by easy stages also drifting into counterfeiting. If these bootleggers had been clients of McGraw, two things would have been accomplished by the bum steer the truth-drug had given us: competitors would have been removed and a blow struck at McGraw, whom they feared.

"A bomb? Who set it off? Was it an accident?" Blanche lay back, thinking. Suddenly she gathered her strength, rose, sitting. "He was willing to blow me up, kill me—to destroy the evidence, save himself!"

"Mr. Kennedy!"

We turned to the door. It was Haley's man who had stood guard at the kitchen end of the passage, while the other blocked the street door.

"I found wires that led from the kitchen through the passageway—and a switch. I——"

"Yes. He nearly killed me—me who has helped him so much and always kept my mouth shut!" cried Blanche.

"Who is the head of this counterfeiting gang?" demanded Kennedy. "Not McGraw, not Tellini——" He paused.

"I'll tell the world! It's that club-footed old miser—Malobar!" cried Blanche desperately. "I'm not afraid of him any more. I used to be. He had something on me. But no one can do more than kill me!"

Haley's man had come forward. "I saw him pull the switch—then the blow-up. We got him—over there!" He jerked his thumb toward the restaurant.

Kennedy was regarding Blanche thoughtfully as he saw broken the power of Malobar over her through the girl's fear, her love of a good time and adventure.

McGraw, watching Craig, seemed almost to anticipate his words.

"Marie was great—with the face. But she forgot the mind, the character. You can't change *soul!* There is no such thing as soul maker and soul slayer—but God and the Devil! Kennedy—man to man—what's it worth if Blanche and McGraw for the Government round up one of the most gigantic counterfeit plots in the history of the Secret Service? Immunity?"

Another of Wetjen's Tales of the Sea

Simpson

He Was the One Weakling in the Tough Crew of a Powder Ship; but When Danger Threatened His Dog!

By Albert Richard Wetjen

THE *Remus* had steamed clear of the Pillars of Hercules and was plowing westward through the blue waters of the Atlantic. She was a squat-bellied tub, choking with a miscellaneous cargo. Her fore and main holds contained special compartments of double wood and felt, crammed with explosives, destined eventually for delivery in Haiti. In port and near shipping she flew the red danger flag and so was a pariah. A tough-looking ship. Tough men manned her.

The second mate of the *Remus* bulked large. His fleshy, smooth-shaven face was scarred with many winds and suns. His arms and hands were thick and muscular. Between his brows a scowl invariably rested. But at times he could be pleasant in a heavy, tolerant way.

Walking aft from the foredeck one morning, as the Spanish coast sank astern, he stopped long enough to poke his head inside the galley door and say " 'Lo" to Simpson the cook. Simpson touched his forehead, murmured "Yessir" nervously, and then got busy stirring pea soup. The second mate's keen eyes roved the galley for signs of dirt.

He saw nothing to cause attention and turned to go. As he stepped clear of the doorway a seaman jostled him roughly. The man had come after the noon meal for his watch. One of the two tin kits he was carrying clanged on the deck and rolled to the scuppers. The second mate half raised a hand to cuff the other.

The seaman sneered. He was Red Saunders, the toughest man for'ard.

" 'It me an' I'll flatten yer," he said tensely.

The second mate recovered himself with an effort. He thrust forward his face.

"Gettin' insolent, eh? If the skipper wasn't set agin fightin' I'd tear the front off you, you damned blackguard!"

Red Saunders laughed. Under his ragged blue-cotton shirt his great chest swelled. He was arrogant in his strength.

"I'll be waitin' on the wharf when we dock," he challenged.

The mate breathed deep. He turned abruptly and strode aft, anger shaking him. Red Saunders, gazing sneeringly after him, retrieved the kit he had dropped and entered the galley.

"Grub!" he spat, slamming the kits on the carving bench.

Simpson smiled shakily and picked up a dipper. He dealt pea soup in one kit and an evil-smelling meat concoction in the other. The soup Saunders passed without comment. The meat he frowned at, sniffed and then pushed back.

"Salt 'orse ag'in? Wot a bloody ship!"

Simpson nodded. "I know. Chief steward says we gotta use it up 'fore 'e starts on the beef."

The sailor snarled, "Pinchin' swine!" Then louder: "Make it more. That ain't enough for a watch."

Simpson measured the meat left in his pot. He measured that in the kit. He shook his head.

"You've 'alf. There won't be enough fer th' other watch."

Red Saunders tore the dipper from him. He approached the pot. Simpson went white.

"I'll get 'ell, Saunders," he said, shivering. He clawed at the sailor's elbow. "You've got 'alf."

The other struck him across the mouth, sending him reeling out of the way. Then he slopped out more meat into his kit. He left the galley without further words and disappeared, his face dark.

Simpson wiped his lips on his stained white apron. There would be trouble when the other watch found they were short of meat. And he was always the one to bear the brunt of any trouble.

A little man was Simpson. Unlike his kind he was mild and clean. His hair was of a pale sandy hue, his eyes were a light brown. His face was thin and pimply, pasty white in color. It looked as if many years of standing before galley fires had drained out every drop of blood. He was not above middle height and his chest and shoulders were small. Not a formidable man. The crew found it easy to bait and bully him. The officers held him in contempt.

At one bell, fifteen minutes to noon, the cabin boy came midships. He came for the saloon meal. No salt horse this time. Good canned beef and ox tongue. Canned mutton, asparagus, potatoes without rotten black spots. Soft bread went aft to the saloon. Stale bread, the saloon's previous day's leaving, and biscuits went for'ard. A starvation ship for seamen, the *Remus*. The crew's quarters were as widely separated as their food: officers aft, under the funny little low bridge that joined right onto a sort of poop: the men for'ard under a short fo'c's'le-head. The whole ship-length between, save for the midship house and the galley.

At noon a seaman came for the meal for the watch that had been on deck before eight bells. He flung two dirty kits on the bench. Like Red Saunders he spat "Grub!" The cook dipped out the pea soup, plenty of that, for peas were cheap and water was not scarce. When he dipped out the meat Simpson's hand shook. The seaman watched him with narrowing eyes that glittered behind thick lids. Then he spoke.

"Port watch been at that kettle ag'in?" His lips curled back in a snarl. His shoulder muscles tightened. His throat swelled.

Simpson licked his lips and nodded. He backed off. The seaman jumped for him, cursing. Simpson cried, "Don't! I told 'im," in a voice that was piping and high, almost a scream. Terror shook him. A carving knife fell from the bench to the tiled deck. An iron pot clanged from its nail. There was a scuffle, hard breathing, the thud of clenched fists on flesh.

The seaman left the galley with his kits soon after, still cursing, his chest rising and falling with his savage anger. When he told the watch and they viewed the short meat ration they threatened darkly. Bad enough to be on a ship where rations were scanty anyway. But to have part stolen! There was no one to visit wrath on, save the cook. No man cared to tackle Red Saunders. And the captain had forbidden fighting for'ard. His law was backed by his own two heavy fists and the fists of his mates. He said, the captain, that the cook must deal the rations, must see they were fairly divided. Wherefore the cook must bear the blame.

Simpson slept for'ard and the robbed watch waited for him and the night and filled up on biscuits and stale bread. The other watch chuckled when they heard.

The cabin boy came midships about one o'clock and brought the dirty cabin dishes. He acted as sculleryman on the *Remus*. Probably no craft has ever put to sea with too many men. The *Remus* was no exception, short-handed and ill-found.

LEAVING the boy to clean up, Simpson went into his little bakeshop, built at one end of the galley, and closed the door. From one of the empty flour barrels that stood against the after bulkhead came a subdued whimpering. Simpson grinned as much as his bruised face would allow and the slinking, furtive, frightened look he wore disappeared. He lifted the wooden barrel lid. A bed of coarse straw was revealed. Sharp animal scents rose up. Resting his paws on the barrel edge, looking into the cook's face, was a little mongrel pup.

His coat was black and tan and wiry-haired. His eyes were big and dark and soft. Over his thick cold nose a streaky tongue played. Simpson bent and fondled the pup, crooning soft words to it, pulling its ears. Then he fed it from a plate of scraps he had brought with him.

Seven weeks before, in Malta, he had found his companion. A bum-boat man had brought him alongside the freighter, together with baskets of fruit and curios, ornaments and obscene pictures of the women in the evil houses ashore. Simpson had possessed the pup in exchange for a silver dollar and had smuggled him into his bakeshop before the captain should see. He was afraid they would take the pup from him. Once clear of the land he didn't worry so much.

The pup finished eating from the plate and Simpson lifted him from the barrel and set him before a tin saucer of water. It happened just then that the cabin boy opened the door to ask a question and Simpson's attention was momentarily drawn away. The pup, licking his chops, scuttled into the galley with an eager yelp and was out on the deck beyond before the cook discovered what was happening.

With a sharp pang of fear the little man followed. It had been his custom to pace the deck with the pup either very early in the morning, before the crew started work, or very late in the evening, when they had finished. This because all hands treated Simpson's pup as they treated the cook himself.

The pup was trotting along the immense stretch of deck for'ard of the bridge. Simpson raced after him, hoping the captain was not about. The pup, thinking it was a game, laughed over his shoulder and scampered off.

A seaman working near the foremast aimed a vicious kick at the black and tan body as it went past. The carpenter, sitting on the hatch and shaving wood, flung a wedge that lay at his feet. It struck the pup in the side, bowled him over. He yelped. He got up and limped. His laugh was gone.

The cook burst on the carpenter and shook a bony fist under his nose.

"Leave my dawg alone, see?" he threatened. His voice shook with passion.

The seaman at the foremast laughed aloud. Two more on the fo'c's'le-head came forward chuckling. It was strange to see Simpson the coward offer violence. The carpenter, a thick-bodied German, rose from the hatch and ruffled his golden mustache.

"Ah see," he grinned. His big fist sank into the cook's midriff, doubling him up, causing him to choke for breath.

"You nod talk so," said the carpenter pleasantly. He twisted the little man's ear. "Cookie nod get vunny."

Simpson cried out with pain and his sudden courage deserted him. He tore himself free. Tears came to him. He was no match for these burly sailormen. Impotent anger stirred in him and he shook. He caught up the pup and stumbled midships with it, caressing it and crooning brokenly. The seamen returned to work, laughing.

Before he reached the galley Simpson ran into the captain. It was his luck to do that. The captain glared at the snuffling pup and reached for it with one huge hand.

"Simpson! That dog again! Didn't I tell you to keep it off the decks in working hours?"

Simpson shrank from him. "Yessir," he mumbled uneasily, watching the reaching hand.

"Give it me." The captain took a step forward. "I'll pitch the damned thing in the ditch."

"Yessir," said Simpson in a voice little above a whisper.

The pup was all he had on the *Remus*, the only friend he could talk with, the only living thing that did not strike him or curse him. He bolted past the captain into the galley. Nor did he stop till he reached the bakeshop, heedless of the cabin boy's gaping surprise. Hastily he clawed at the flour barrel, dropped the pup inside and replaced the lid.

"Cook'll see they don't hurt him," he mumbled. He went out into the galley, white-faced and afraid, to brave the captain's wrath. He locked the bakeshop door behind him.

However, the captain on the deck outside made no move toward the galley. He chuckled deep in his throat and went on. No spine in the cook. Gutless, that was it, Couldn't blame any one but himself if he got stepped on so often.

WHEN it was dark and the eternal cooking was done for the day, Simpson took the pup for a stroll along the deck. A piece of rope yarn, tied round the little throat and held secure in the cook's hand, prevented the pup from breaking away and rushing with delirious eagerness to investigate strange sounds and smells the night carried.

Stealthily, as though bent on some evil task, Simpson led his companion round the deck. He avoided the seamen lounging on the forehatch and fo'c's'le-head under the wide-eyed summer stars. If they saw him they would torment him and the pup until they went back to the bakeshop. Besides, one watch was waiting for him, planning reprisal for its short meat ration. Miserably Simpson thought he would sleep in the galley to-night.

He avoided the bridge aft. There was a chance the captain might see him and carry out his threat of drowning the pup. And any of the mates might take it into his brutal head to do likewise. There was little room for human kindness on the *Remus*. It took hard men to sail a ship with a cargo of death. Such a ship was a floating bomb. Even smoking could be done only in certain spots. Added to the dangers of the sea was the silent stuff in the wood and felt compartments underfoot.

By his caution the cook this time escaped both seamen and deck officers. But near the mainmast he ran into one of the engineers, a sullen-faced young Nova Scotian who had drunk away his patrimony and was busy drinking up his wages as fast he earned them in an effort to erase a certain memory.

The pup rubbed against his legs before Simpson was aware a man was near. The engineer pushed with his foot, not savagely, but firmly. The cook drew in on the rope yarn to take the pup away.

The engineer said, in a dead voice, "Your dog?"

Simpson stopped and nodded. He had heard the engineer's sweetheart had died the day they were to have been married. He felt sorry for the man. He was a butt of Chance as the cook was a butt of the *Remus*. Sympathy stirred in him. He felt he wanted to stroke the other's head, as he stroked his pup's, and croon to him.

"My dawg? Yessir. Found 'im in Malta on a bum-boat. Smart little feller, that 'e is."

The engineer smiled a trifle. "Yes?" He bent slowly and ruffled the dog's ear. "Funny I've never seen him before."

"No, sir." Simpson shifted uneasily. "I have to keep 'im shut up in the day, sir. Skipper's orders, sir."

The engineer straightened. "I see." He leaned against the mast and looked over the whispering water to where Gibraltar lay somewhere astern.

The cook hesitated awhile and then moved away toward the galley. He was very sorry for the engineer, and very warm. The man had fondled his dog.

Going aft to get the next day's supplies, some two hours later, Simpson passed the engineer's cabin under the lower bridge. The lights were on inside, shining through the open port across which the curtain had been drawn. Out of curiosity the cook stopped and looked in, just a peep.

The engineer was sitting on his leather settee, bending forward and gazing at a framed picture of a laughing girl. She had died the day they were to have been married. On the little baize-covered table stood a half-empty whisky bottle and a glass. The engineer was swaying a little already, just as he sat. Simpson sighed and went on to see the chief steward.

HE WAS returning amidships with supplies when the first warning came. From the foredeck an excited cry. Then another. Then clearly: "Fire!"

The quiet, dark bridge above woke to life. Bells rang. The silent decks flooded with running men. White-faced and cursing, the captain swept by. Simpson hurried to his galley, set down his supplies and hurried out again. From for'ard somewhere a red glow stabbed the dark. A seaman brushed past him, shouting: "Fo'c's'le's burning like 'ell!"

Men rushed along with the chemical sprays and the smoke helmets. The *Remus* shivered underfoot, a waiting bomb, leashed death inside her. The engines stopped. Simpson answered the fire call and went to his station, his frail body more in the way than of any help. He was deadly afraid, shivering, his spine crawling. He did not want to die. The mates moved around, shouting. The captain was calm now, and his lips were tight. Confusion grew.

An hour later the boat falls creaked. The fire laughed and roared unchecked. It was merely a question of time before the first choking shock came. Officers and men clawed at the boat falls on the davits. The fire frightened them. Or perhaps it was the tense cargo waiting below decks. They abandoned her.

Everybody's Magazine, February, 1924

It was done in the heat and rush of the moment. Blind panic took charge. Dropping the fire apparatus, everything, seamen and firemen swarmed overside. The operator stammered out one last despairing cry on his wireless and deserted it. The captain was swept overside by the mate. Simpson got into the second mate's boat. There was no time to think if a man wanted to get away. The *Remus's* foredeck was ablaze now.

Flames shot from the fo'c's'le scuttle, from the forepeak hatch. They seemed to leap and lick up the mast to the very truck. Ropes fell like burning serpents, twisting.

SIMPSON glanced around. He remembered the engineer he had seen drunk in his cabin, gazing at the girl's picture. The man was nowhere in view. The little cook looked up at the burning deck and whimpered. He didn't want to go back. He spoke to the second mate, sweating, fire-blackened, cursing in the stern sheets. He clawed at the officer's knees.

The second mate spat thickly and rose. "Engineer? Cock-eyed? Hold her for a while!" He swayed up the pilot ladder hanging from the main-deck rail. He disappeared.

Simpson whimpered and prayed on the bottom boards while the seamen's boots walked on him, struck him.

From farther down the hull the captain bawled "Give way!" The boats pushed off. The first of the panic passed and men swung steadily at the long sweeps. The sea heaved and whispered under the fat, short keels. Porpoises leaped from the surface in boiling curves, as though curious to see what it was all about. There was no moon. The pale white stars were dimmed by the growing red of the fire.

Impatiently those in the second mate's boat waited. They wanted to push off and join the other boats in a dash for safety. The *Remus* might go up any minute now. The second mate appeared at the rail above, the engineer slung over his shoulder. He dropped the man down and swung after him.

"Give way!" Breathless he reached the stern sheets.

Hastily the sweeps dug into the sea. The boat shot clear of the *Remus*. Simpson was glad, warm inside. He felt like crying. He crouched by the maudlin engineer and bathed his forehead. He wanted to be good to this man, for he had fondled his dog. Dog!

He stood up suddenly, so suddenly he rocked the boat. Men swore at him. Red Saunders, the toughest sailor of them all, clutched at his ankle. He took no heed. His eyes burned wide in his pasty face. With a convulsive leap he was overside and swimming madly back to the ship. He knew no fear now. He did not think of it.

The second mate's jaw dropped foolishly. "Fer God's sake," he said. The seamen were silent.

Then, "Two mad uns t'gether," some one said, jerking a thumb at the engineer. They pulled on. Not for all the gold in the Indies would they have returned to the *Remus*.

Simpson reached the pilot ladder and climbed. Into the galley he stumbled, sweat streaming from his face. The red blaze for'ard lit the decks like day. It crept aft at an appalling speed. Already the hatche were alight over number one. Scant minutes before the bomb would awake.

Into the bakeshop the cook stumbled. He dragged himself to the flour barrel wherein the pup whined and scratched. The lid came off. Two little paws appeared.

"Gawd!" Simpson whispered. Then he dragged himself to his knees. "Near fergot." The quick hard swim had exhausted him. He coughed out water and jerked the pup to him. He stumbled through the galley again. The pup whimpered and struggled. Then, when it saw the licking flames, it crouched low in the sheltering arms.

Simpson swayed down the pilot ladder to reach the sea again. Two-thirds down he lost hold and fell. The water boiled over him. Down he went, and down. The pup kicked frantically but was held tight.

After a while they came up. The man was choking. He struck out feebly. The pup clawed and sneezed as his nose broke the surface and the warm night air rushed sweet into his lungs. They drew away from the burning ship, man and dog, both swimming.

The second mate, who had been glancing back ever since the cook had gone, saw the pup and the man cross a dancing red reflection in the water.

"Comin' back," he said hoarsely. For some reason he crimsoned under his tan. An oath escaped him.

Red Saunders rested suddenly on his sweep and spat overside.

"Went back fer the bloody dawg! Strike me blind if the swine ain't got guts."

"By God!" The second mate choked and his flush deepened. In that moment he despised himself. Savagely he jammed over the tiller. "I'm going back!"

The chief steward, squatting near him, clawed at his knees. He screamed: "You damned fool, Arnold! You'll kill us all for a sniveling cook."

A fireman swore horribly and spread his great hands. "Let's go on," he said, his voice metallic. Hard men murmured. Any moment the explosion might come. Half a mile farther and they would be fairly safe. Let the cook swim for it. He had had his chance. What did a dog matter, anyway?

Red Saunders let his sweep trail and his arm shot out. His big thumb sank into the fireman's windpipe. "Guts," he quoth calmly. "The swine's got 'em. Go back fer a dawg! Choke, you scum! We go back fer a better man'n you."

Red Saunders let the other go. He lay back on his sweep again. The murmurs died. The fireman pawed at his throat and said no more.

The second mate swore, "You're a man," to Red Saunders. His face was savage. The boat came round. He might be killing all hands. But he couldn't watch that blasted cook swimming with the dog.

Red Saunders spat again and laughed. Tough he was and evil he was, and in his heart he had pity for no man or woman. But, "Blackguard I am," he said, "an' ye told me so yerself. An' fer that I'll beat in yer face when we land."

The second mate nodded and was glad. He was a man himself.

They raced for the cook and reached for him. Dog and all he was dragged over the gunwale. The boat swung round and, rowing as they had never rowed before, the seamen made the long sweeps crack. Far off the other boats clustered and waited for the end.

THE night was split. The stars disappeared. Red flame spouted from the very sea. The surface vomited waves, tossing boiling mountains. A wind blast, like a hurricane compressed into a squall, passed them. Stunned, men toppled forward, or backward, as the wind took them. The boat soared and sank, shipped water, heaved soggily. There was no world.

Then the sky opened. From the black vapor hot steel whickered down, wood splinters, iron shot. A sound as of hail falling spread over the sea. But no man heard. Even in the boats far away men were deaf.

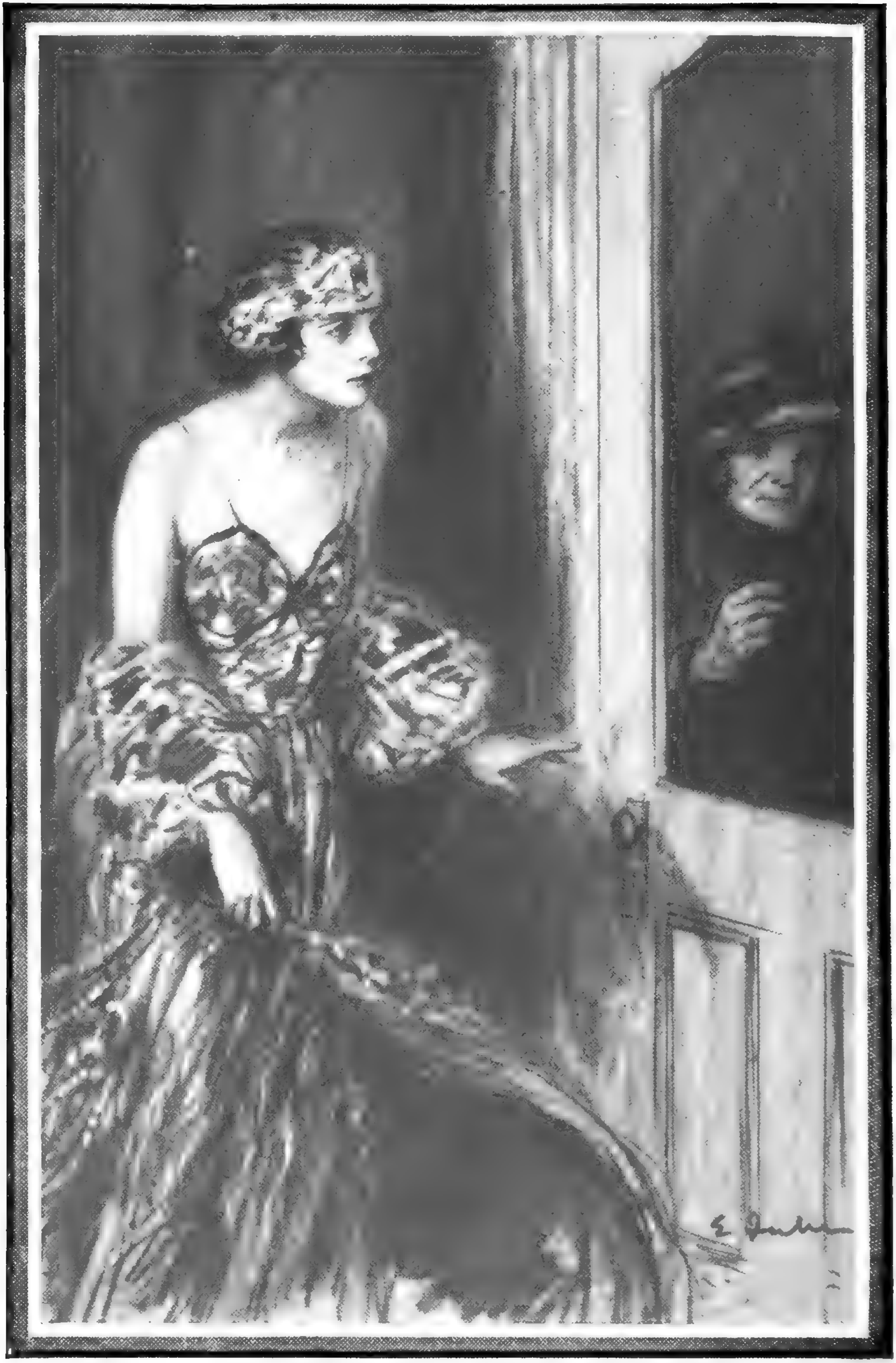
Two holes were knocked in the second mate's craft. Men received gashes and wounds. When it ended only the air tanks were keeping them afloat. The vapor cleared away. The sound as of hail falling ceased. The stars appeared, murky at first. The sea calmed very slowly. A shivering wet pup crawled over half-floating bodies and miserably licked the face of Simpson, hanging over a thwart. There was no *Remus*.

The captain's boat came racing over the water. They expected to find men dead. Afterward they guessed the worst of the concussion had passed over the boat. They plugged the holes in her clinker-built hull, they baled her dry. They bandaged the unconscious and propped them up. Then they towed the boat back to the little flotilla that waited far away.

Red Saunders was the first to stir and open his eyes. He groped to a sitting posture and spat blood for a while. Then he gathered his numbed wits. His eyes roved around. They saw a long-decked, brilliantly lighted liner on the horizon, bearing toward him. She had seen the flames and was coming to investigate. Then he saw a shivering pup licking a pasty face.

Red Saunders was a killer. Tough he was and evil he was, and in his heart he had pity for no man or woman. Hard he had lived and hard he would die. But, "Guts!" he said. "Gawd!" Then he nodded very gravely and reached down for the pup's ears. Grinning he fondled them.

"Pearls of St. Matthew's," by Albert Richard Wetjen, a story of greed in the South Seas and its unusual punishment, will appear in March EVERYBODY'S, on sale February 15.



Gradually the something at which she was looking took form, a face pressed to the glass—a face ivory-white on one side, the other side dim and blurred.

Guilty or Innocent?

The Double House

Not Guilty! So Said the Jury. But with the Years Suspicion and Ostracism Still Pursue John Dascome. Enter Romance—in a Lady from Russia—and a Strange Half-Wit

By Elizabeth Dejeans

Illustrations by Ernest Fuhr

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

"ALL roads lead to Rome," they say. And in America, it may be said as truly, "All roads lead to the City of the Angels."

Possibly the thought had crossed the mind of the man who stood on a hillside perch with the octopus-like reaches of Los Angeles far flung beneath him. At that moment, he was using powerful field-glasses which made objects very distinct. He stood screened by spikes of yucca, his gray Scotch tweeds indistinguishable against the grayish dun of the hillside.

Through his field-glasses, John Dascome was watching intently a woman who had come out on the balcony of the house just below. The house was at the end of the street which ran boldly up the hillside and could go no farther because it had thrust its nose into the hill. Though in features and bearing she suggested a certain wilful ease, she was clad like a worker, in a serviceable cotton gown and with sleeves rolled to the shoulder, revealing white rounded arms.

John Dascome! His name would mean nothing to the woman he watched. He was sure of that. She would know nothing of the long ordeal of his trial for his wife's murder; of that racking age of imprisonment; of the way in which, step by step, they had gone about the task of proving him a murderer, actuated by the lowest and basest motives to the most despicable of crimes.

He had been acquitted—yes! But what an acquittal—with half the world, no, all of it, believing him guilty—with his life in ruin and collapse, with nothing left to live for save the ceaseless effort to prove his innocence.

And now, here in Los Angeles, he faced this new trial—this strange and incredible conjunction of a figure out of that spectral past with this woman whom he watched—this woman who had, since those mad days in Red Russia, dominated his thoughts, his hopes, his aspirations. God knew what the outcome would be! As for him, he could do no more than live from day to day, hour to hour.

Dascome continued to watch her: she had not looked up at the hillside; she was gazing down the street to its intersection with the car line four blocks below. As yet, the cars were unlighted; at night, the long electric artery connecting Los Angeles with the beach towns and passing through Hollywood was dotted with moving lights; Hollywood with its back to the mountains, one long arm reaching to the mother city, and the other outstretched toward the ocean, its hillside homes looking down on ever-spreading subdivisions.

The woman's house stood one cheek

turned to the hillside with straight-ahead views of cañon and farther hills. Its other cheek was turned to the sloping streets of Hollywood and the wide plateau-like reaches of Los Angeles; on one hand the hills of California untamed, sagebrush and yucca; on the other, California man-made, greened by cultivation, built upon, electric-lighted and paved. Her house was of stucco and Spanish in structure, part of it two stories, part a story and a half. The front of the house projected over a basement garage, forming the gallery on which she stood. It was a double house, designed for two families, but the fact was pleasantly disguised; from the street below, it looked a spacious single dwelling, erected by some one with ample means and an eye for the beautiful. It was new; trees and vines were in their infant stage.

The woman went inside, into a large room, long and with a high-groined ceiling and a spacious fireplace; an unusual room, with windows high up, and its stucco walls hung with paintings. There were two noticeable Japanese paintings, long mellow kakemonos reaching from the high-set windows almost to the floor and covering the wall space of one side of the room, except the space directly opposite the fireplace, which was occupied by an inviting couch some twelve feet long and piled with cushions.

The woodwork of the room was black, and it was full of beautiful oriental objects, teak-wood and bronzes and huge oriental lamps, all dull in color. But the upholstery of the chairs was of lacquer red, as were the hangings, and there was oriental red in the rugs, genuine dhurries. Orange and red predominated in the furnishings of the long couch. The atmosphere of the room was an odd combination of severity and warmth, dignity and sensuous ease.

WARMTH dominated the room, as it appeared to dominate the woman. She was not overly tall; it was her abundance of dusky hair piled high and her supple slimness that gave the impression of height. Hers were rounded lines, however; she had the firm high bust of a girl and, though she might be twenty-nine, there was something indestructibly youthful in her appearance—youthful and at the same time luxuriant. Her face was interesting rather than beautiful; a graceful throat, a softly rounded chin and a full-lipped mouth with frankly seductive corners; these in contrast to the upper part of the face, for the broad forehead with its nobly arched brows and crown of dusky hair was meditative, aloof. And her eyes were extraordinary, a green-gray-hazel set wide apart and shadowed by sleepy blue-tinged lids; it was their melancholy tinting and sleepy droop that gave them their wistful languor, and their brilliancy when lighted by emotion—as at this moment.

She had switched on the lights, bringing to life the coiled red dragons on the lampshades. The room glowed, as did she. "Well, Karesia Kaime?" she said with vivid emphasis. "You sleep under your own roof at last—but alone!"

She flashed a gleaming glance at the glowing room, then went swiftly through it, crossed the hall, passed through the dining-room with its fine old mahogany, and went into the kitchen. The big room and the dining-room were in order, but the kitchen was in confusion, with barrels oozing excelsior and stacks of unpacked china and glass.

Shoving aside the barrels, she found a board with a stake attached. Armed with it and a hammer, she took her swift way back to the gallery and along the walk. Into the soft new earth of the lawn, she thrust the stake. Then she applied the hammer vigorously. "There, you, '*For Rent*'—get—me—a *neighbor!*" she said between blows. Dascome, who had not moved from his lookout on the hillside, kept his glasses leveled on her.

She straightened, glowing and breathing quickly, and encountered the moon; Dascome could see her lifted face distinctly. The sun had gone; the brief California twilight was beginning. She looked at the moon and, with astonishing suddenness, she lost her heat and fret; her brows unbent and she smiled at the moon. "Oh, immutable!" she said softly. "An atom fussing over its ant-hill—a cat chasing its tail." From above, she looked as if she were praying.

She turned and went into the house with the smile still touching her lips. Then, in a practical way, she secured the windows for the night. She did not go upstairs; she opened a closet door which was opposite the stairway, very evidently part of the space under the stairway belonging to the adjoining house. At the back of this closet was what appeared to be a wooden partition, and against it was a tall cabinet. She reached inside; it swung toward her and brought with it part of the wooden partition, revealing an opening into another closet, the remainder of the space under the stairway, a closet made for the other house.

It was a concealed entrance into the other half of Karesia Kaime's domain, for when she opened the door of this second closet it ushered her into the next house. These rooms were unfurnished, and shiningly new. She made the rounds of all the windows, downstairs and upstairs, latching them and drawing the shades, then passed through the secret entrance. Then, as she was about to swing the cabinet back into place, she was startled by what sounded like a faint tapping.

She came out into the hall and listened, but the sound was not repeated. "Nothing," she said. "Don't get nerves—at least this early in the evening." Turning, she went up to the bedrooms on her side of the house. One was shiningly white and prepared for occupancy; she closed its door and went into a suite of rooms across the hall.

This was hers, a bedroom and a glazed room beyond. There was her atmosphere about the place, touches of warmth, red and orange and odd rugs like those in the big room below, and couches with many cushions. The same contrasts too; a plain desk-table, bookcases and a typewriter.

She began to put the garments away; tailored suits, evening gowns that bore a French label, stacks of silken undergarments and negligees. The last thing she handled was a curious garment, a silken mesh, a clinging, serpentine creation of an indescribable red with barbaric touches of black and gold and an overdress of rippling gold tissue. It looked like a Tartar theft from a North India bazaar, a gift of a chieftain to a dancer when Petrograd was still St. Petersburg.

KARESIA KAIME regarded the garment half gravely, half amusedly; took it to the mirror and held it against herself. It vivified her coloring, wiped out the American frankness. In that garment she looked a serpentine dancer of St. Petersburg cafés. Suddenly, she took off the cotton gown she was wearing, and drew on the snake's skin, then stood away from the mirror, twisted and turned and bent, eyes and lips mischievous.

Next, she took from her trunk red silk stockings and black satin shoes embroidered with red dragons, and a marvelous fan formed of two birds of paradise. Then she drew out from tissue paper a broad headband stiff with cut stones, red, yellow, purple, and green; in the center, designed to rest above the brows, was a peacock's eye, its colors beautifully done in tiny stones. She kicked off her serviceable shoes, stripped off her stockings and arrayed herself.

Then, fan waving, she surveyed her reflection, her eyes half wistful, half mirthful. "A house-warming!" she said softly. "A merry-making without guests!" Then she flung back her head. "'*Fortes fortuna adjuvat*,' Karesia Kaime."

She swept out of the room and made a regal descent into the glowing room below. She seated herself on the couch and looked about her, waving the glow of the room to her bosom, herself glowing with some deep inward satisfaction. . . . Then, gradually, she ceased her fanning, the light left her face and the little lines that tell of things remembered, of life lived, appeared about her eyes and mouth. With a sigh, she dropped back on the couch, drew her feet up and lay full length. She took a cigarette from the tabouret, smoked and gazed at the ceiling from beneath drooping lids, unsmiling, thoughtful. There was not a sound, perfect stillness.

Suddenly, she sat up and listened—a tapping—silence—then the tapping repeated. Karesia Kaime moved to the center of the room and listened. It came from beyond the dining-room, as if some one were tapping on a window. She crossed the hall and the dining-room, tense, and gazing into the glazed porch beyond, where she had forgotten to draw the shades; gradually, the something at which she was looking took form, a face pressed to the glass of the door opening into the garden. The light from within shone on it, a face ivory-white on one side and a dim eye, the other side of the face dark and blurred.

She went straight on and toward it; then it disappeared. With the same tense courage that had urged her on, she jerked at the outer door and opened it wide.

"Who is out here?" she demanded of the flood of moonlight. "Who is out here?" she repeated.

THERE was no answer to her demand, and Karesia Kaime could see no one. She clutched at her swathing gown and stepped out into the moonlight, and then her heart leaped into her throat, for, around the corner of the porch, lurked a body, some one crouched against the wall.

But she stood her ground. "Come out of there—whoever you are! Who are you? What are you doing here?" she demanded.

Gradually the figure cleared the corner; not a man, a woman, something in black and with face concealed. A mumbled voice came from it. "I—I didn't mean to frighten you; I was frightened——"

Karesia lost some of her fear, but little of her anger. "You have been sneaking about my house for an hour! What do you want—tapping on my windows?"

"I only wanted to speak to you. . . . Then I saw you were dressed up—I thought company was coming. I wanted so much to speak to you first." Through the mumbled voice ran a quiver, desperate eagerness and utter humility.

"You mean you're in trouble?" Karesia Kaime asked in a different tone.

"Yes."

It did occur to Karesia that crooks sometimes used strange accomplices, but it was the warmer thing than her brain that said: "Come into my house. Then we can talk."

The woman crept in, with her head hung and a hand pressed to her left cheek, spread as if to cover it. Under the woman's hat Karesia glimpsed the uncovered cheek, ivory-white; her black dress was worn and unfashionable, her hat a cheap straw.

"We will go into the front room," she said. The creature's voice and manner had gone to her heart; she looked so pitifully poor and bent and frightened.

The woman preceded her, head hung. At Karesia's bidding, she sidled into a chair and sat with head still more bent.

"Now what is it?" Karesia asked. "You said you were in trouble."

"I want so much to get—to get work."

"Oh! Well, there are plenty of people who want work done—I am one of them. . . . I should like to see your face, though." The way the woman averted her face annoyed her.

"It's . . . I'm afraid you won't take me then."

Karesia waited and said nothing, and the woman drew her hand away from her cheek with painful, trembling slowness. Then she lifted her face and looked at the warmly beautiful and physically perfect woman who had demanded that she do it.

If Karesia Kaime had not had experience in self-control, she would have cried out: the flesh of the woman's cheek from the corner of her mouth to her temple and across her left eye was puckered and drawn and red; the scar or birthmark drew her mouth up at one corner and half closed the eye. The other cheek was painfully thin and wrinkled, and her hair was white. Her good eye was sunken and a foggy blue; it had the dull, filmed look one sees in the eyes of the very old or the witless; she was a little, toil-worn, disfigured old woman, droop-shouldered and bent. Out of her vague eyes looked fear and supplication.

Karesia did not exclaim, but in a perfect misery of pity she got to her feet. "Yes—yes," she said indistinctly. "Take off your hat. . . . I'll get you a glass of water—something." And she hurried out.

She brought the water in, and the woman took the glass and drank a little, pathetically eager to please. She had taken off her hat; Karesia noticed her hands, the nails worn to the flesh and the skin reddened and rough, a scrubwoman's hands. They were clean, however, and her black dress, though worn threadbare, was neat. And there was an air of refinement about the poor creature, as if she had been well reared. At first glance, she looked a very old woman—her hair was a rusty white. But Karesia doubted now whether she was much over fifty; she had the look of premature age caused by illness and suffering.

"Thank you—very much," she said, and Karesia took the glass from her shaking hands. "I thought this was a new house and you might let me work—like scrubbing, or washing the windows," she suggested timidly but eagerly.

"I WILL help you in every possible way," Karesia answered reassuringly; "but are you able to work? You look so frail."

"Oh, yes! I am strong—indeed I am. I

washed all the windows in a house on—near here, and the woman let me stay in her garage. I can work, and, if you would let me try, perhaps you'll keep me right along."

"You are not fit to do hard work like that." Karesia was trying to think of some home for unfortunates to which she could send her; what physician to get for her.

"Yes, I am. . . . It's just my face—it frightens people." Her twisted mouth quivered. Then with sudden vehemence: "I won't go to doctors! I'm not ill—it's just that I get frightened!"

"Fear is the most painful illness one can have," Karesia said gently. "It would be cruel to let you do hard work. I couldn't do it. But there are little things you could do for me, until I know the best way to help you. The woman I expected to work for me has left me in the lurch. . . . What is your name?"

The question seemed to startle the woman terribly: her eyes widened and her lips parted. She fumbled in the bosom of her dress. Her face grew blank, then terrified and wildly confused; for a moment, she looked desperate. Then, with a look of vast relief, she produced a small notebook. She looked up from a hasty perusal. "Mary—Mary Bliss. That's my name! It's written down, so I shouldn't forget."

Karesia's throat ached. "It's a pretty name—Mary Bliss," she said bravely. "Come in the morning, Mary, and we will work together. Then I shall see what can be done."

The woman got up in a shaking, distressed way, then stood. "But couldn't I—wouldn't you let me stay here to-night?"

To Karesia the appeal was as unwelcome as it was unexpected; her home was her temple, acquired with difficulty and loved intensely. Her instinct was to shut out from it all that was painful or alien. "I am afraid not," she said gently.

"I could sleep anywhere—in the house. In a chair, if you would let me," the woman begged.

"But you have a place to stay—you spoke of the garage," Karesia objected. "If you need anything to-night, I shall be glad to give it to you, food or money."

Mary Bliss was trembling from head to feet. "I'm afraid there. The woman has gone away—she's been gone for two days."

Karesia did not know what to do. How could she take into her house a half-witted woman of whom she knew nothing? She cast about for an alternative, her pity struggling with reluctance.

The woman's mumbling voice took on a sharper note. "Last night, there was a man walking about and watching. He came back to-day and tried to get into the garage. I knew he'd hurt me. I didn't go out all day—till this evening I got out through the garage window in the back. I had to find another place, so I came here. I can't go back there! I *can't*—I'm afraid!"

Karesia's brows lowered into a straight line. "He meant to hurt you?"

"He was watching and waiting and he tried to get in."

"Is he some one you know?"

The answer was a wail. "I don't know—I can't *remember!* I think he knows me."

"What kind of a man, Mary? What did he look like?"

"A tall big man with a long face and little eyes."

"How was he dressed?"

"In brown clothes. He had on good clothes."

"But why should he be watching you? You've done nothing wrong, have you?" Karesia Kaime with brows bent and eyes agleam and an edge of white teeth showing was a very different person from the softly smiling, sleepy-eyed woman who had looked over her fan at the glowing room, or the compassionate woman who had brought Mary Bliss into her house. One discovered suddenly that there were red flecks in her hazel eyes and a bronze tinge in her hair; fighting blood in her, something tigerish, defiant and ready to spring.

MARY BLISS gasped and retreated a step in abject terror. "No! No! All I've ever done is to work—just work——"

"I'm not angry with *you!*" Karesia said swiftly. "I'd like to see the man who would attempt to hurt a crippled woman—and I in reach of him!" She drew a quick breath and calmed suddenly. "Now stop being frightened, Mary, and just answer my questions as well as you can. If I take you in here, it is only right that I should know. . . . Where was your home, and who are your people?"

Evidently Mary Bliss had been questioned in this way before, for she brought forth the small notebook hurriedly. " 'I grew up in an orphans' home in Montreal, Canada. The mark on my face is a birthmark,' " she quoted. Then she held the book to her breast, her filmed eyes on Karesia. "Then I worked for people in the country. Some people I worked for brought me on the train to a farm here. Then they sold it and didn't want me any longer and went away. Then I walked to—here." She spoke as if she were concentrating every faculty she possessed on what she was saying. "I've worked wherever people would let me stay. I haven't any people."

"Do you know the name of the asylum where you were as a child?" Karesia asked.

"No," she said in distress.

"Nor the places where you have worked, or the names of the people?"

"No," she confessed, looking more and more terrified. "Oh, no, I *can't!*" She looked as if she would collapse.

Karesia could not go on with it; it was like applying torture. "We won't talk any more," she said soothingly. "I will take you upstairs and you must remember that you are safe with me." She could not do otherwise. The woman made her heart ache. Possibly in the long past she had committed a crime; there was no telling what her past had been, but her present need was evident enough. "You have a home here, Mary," she promised her.

A faint flush rose to the woman's white cheek. "Thank you—very much. I'll work hard for you."

"We'll both have a good night's sleep first, I hope." Then it occurred to Karesia. "But you have none of your things!"

For the first time, Karesia saw in the filmed eyes a flash of something that was not fear; a flicker of pride over an accomplishment. "I brought them with me. They're in the corner by the porch." Mary Bliss might be half-witted, but what she had determined upon, she had accomplished; she had sought shelter and had found it.

When, mindful of the "watching and waiting" man, Karesia herself went for the bundle and brought it in, a shawl wrapped about some clothing, her sense of humor asserted itself: she was having a house-warming after all! She lost her faint smile, however, as she watched Mary Bliss's bent body toiling up the stairs, her poor bundle hugged to her. And when she ushered her into the snow-white room with its as snowy bathroom beyond, and Mary Bliss stood transfixed, the tears pricked Karesia's eyelids.

"You mean—I'm to sleep *here?*"

"Yes. Now come over to the desk and write my name in your little book," she said hastily. "See, here are pen and ink."

Mary Bliss came as bidden, and Karesia stood beside her while she fumbled the book from her bosom and chose a page. It was a thin, soiled little notebook, evidently much handled, yet with few notes in it. Mary Bliss did not hold the pen awkwardly, but when Karesia gave her her name, she seemed unable to write it; she began to tremble.

"Can't you write it, Mary?"

"I can't remember it."

"Just one letter at a time then. Try it this way—S-o-n-y-a K-a-r-e-s-i-a K-a-i-m-e."

Mary Bliss wrote it letter by letter. When it was written, there was again the look of achievement in the dim eyes she lifted to Karesia. Then, suddenly, fear blighted her face and she scrambled to her feet. "Some one is trying to come inside," she whispered. She shivered and cowered. "I hear them—at the front door!"

Fear is contagious, and Karesia felt a chill go down her back. "I don't hear any one." But the next moment she heard the peal of her bell.

"Don't go!" Mary Bliss begged, shaking and crouching.

Karesia recovered herself quickly. "Certainly I shall go!" Then with mingled pity and repulsion: "Don't cower down like that! Nobody will dare to hurt you, Mary—have a *little* courage!"

"I think it's that man——"

"And if it is, I won't let him hurt you! I'd like to see any one try it! Lock your door, if it will make you feel better. It's only a caller." And she swept out with an assurance she did not feel.

BEFORE Karesia Kaime reached her front door, she had run the gamut of painfully disagreeable probabilities. The gallery light made distinct every detail of her unwelcome caller, a man a little over forty, not in "brown clothes," but in Scotch tweed, from cap to boots perfection in the way of a tramping outfit. He was fair and heavily tanned. All this she saw as she looked, brows bent, directly into gray-blue eyes that studied her as steadily and as intently as she studied him. He had lifted his cap hastily.

"I am afraid I have disturbed you. . . . I am looking for a house to rent—I saw the sign." His voice was quiet and deep.

Karesia felt an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh. The change in her expression was swift: her brows regained their arch, her lips lost their fierce line. "I'm—I think it's too late," she said with a caught breath.

"The house is rented?"

"Oh, no—I meant it was too late to show it," she said, more easily.

"It is only eight o'clock."

Eight o'clock. It seemed to Karesia that half the night had passed since she had erected that sign. She laughed.

"Oh!" she said. "I didn't realize—it seemed later. . . . Please come in."

He entered and stood, cap in hand. His eyes could be swift and keen as well as steady, for, at a glance, he absorbed the glowing room and the valuable paintings. What John Dascome thought of its strangely gowned owner could not be judged by his expression; he looked at her very steadily, and Karesia's sleepy eyes were busied with him.

"Please sit down while I explain." She took the couch, quite unconscious of the impression she might convey. Though she took up her marvelous fan and toyed with it, she had forgotten both it and her attire completely. "I am afraid the sign may have misled you. It is not my entire house which is for rent, only the unfurnished half of it. It is a double house, each side quite separate from the other. There are seven rooms in this side and eight in the other, not a large house, you see—it would not accommodate many servants. One garage of the double garage below belongs to the other house. I built a small cottage in the rear of my grounds and it has a garage, in case a tenant wishes to rent an extra garage and rooms for a chauffeur, but that is all I have to offer." Talk of her house deepened the color in Karesia's cheeks—it was an adventure as yet untried.

Dascome observed her gravely. "I do not want a large house but one with about the number of rooms you mention. I should want the cottage for my Japanese servant and the extra garage for my car. My daughter could use the basement garage for her car. My family consists of my daughter and myself."

Quite suddenly he smiled and his smile gave an impression of its infrequency, a friendly touch to features somewhat worn; a brightening of eyes that were too steady. It was more in keeping with his well-knit, virile body, for, though he was fair-haired and blue-eyed, his face, unsmiling, was somber.

She returned his smile. "I should require a lease," she said.

"I want to lease for a year."

"Have you lived here long?"

She asked not as one demanding references, but he understood instantly. "I come of New England people. My home was in New York, but for several years I have been traveling. My daughter and I have been here about a month. We are at the Hollywood Hotel. I can give you references—bank references and others. My name is—John Dascome."

Karesia noticed the brief pause before he spoke his name and the unwavering way in which he looked at her. Her introduction of herself was tentative: "This is my home, and I am Sonya Karesia—Kaime."

KARESIA was very certain that she had never heard his name before, and, evidently, she was as much a stranger to him. She was amused. She rather enjoyed the moment's silence; she let the request come from him:

"May I see the next house?"

"Certainly. I will get the keys."

They were upstairs and she rose and went swiftly; she always moved swiftly when she had an objective, but she noticed the way in which he sprang to his feet and remained standing.

But when she reached the foot of the stairs she had a disagreeable reminder; she saw a black figure vanishing into a doorway. In her intense interest in John Dascome, she had forgotten Mary Bliss; evidently the woman had been haunting the stairway and listening.

Karesia's already warm cheeks flamed. But, as she went up, she lost her anger: if she herself had been in as deadly terror of some man whom Mary Bliss had insisted upon interviewing, most likely she also would have crept to the stairway to listen. She saw that Mary Bliss had not closed her door, that she was hovering on the threshold, abjectly fearful.

"It is not the man you described at all, Mary," she said quickly. "It's a family wanting to rent the next house."

"Don't go over there with him—alone!"

"You poor thing! I know a good man when I see him."

Long afterward, measured by crowded events, Karesia remembered her assertion and the woman's tragic answer: "There are no good men."

"I think there are," Karesia said, and turned into her room. "Poor soul! What a bitter answer!" she thought soberly. She pondered, however, as she went downstairs: she did not need to go with him—better perhaps if she did not.

She found Dascome standing where she had left him. If she had known that he had followed her to the foot of the stairs and had listened to the two voices above, then, when he had heard her descending, had returned swiftly to his former position, she might not have handed over to him so confidently the keys of her domain.

He took them, but asked, "Won't you—would it be too much trouble for you to come, too?"

"I'd rather you formed an unbiased opinion," she answered lightly. The uplift of the corners of her mouth and the momentary gleam in her wistful eyes were simply Sonya Karesia; unwittingly, they had worked mischief—for herself—many and many a time.

Dascome smiled in return. "But wouldn't I become mixed as to electric switches and cupboards?"

To refuse appeared to her silly. Besides, she wanted to go; she liked his presence. It rankled in her, Mary Bliss's bitter answer, "There are no good men." Sometimes, in quick annoyance, she herself had said the same thing; even her head carpenter had smiled in her eyes when he asked, "But won't you be lonesome here all by yourself?" Not an inkling of that sort of thing had this man shown. His quiet impersonal manner drew her like a magnet. She had already owned to herself that, in her very considerable experience with men, no man had ever given her so instantaneously a feeling of liking and trust, of confidence and security.

"That's true," she agreed. "I had better go with you."

DASCOME followed Karesia Kaime out into the moonlight. It turned her hair a dense black and the floating gold of her sleeves into silver. Except for a stray gleam or two, her flashing Russian headdress was obliterated. He watched her intently while she unlocked the outer door to the unfurnished side of the house.

"You see, it is quite a separate house," she remarked, as she turned on the lights.

Surreptitiously, Dascome looked at her more than he did at the brightly lighted rooms; the unshaded lights revealed details, the bronze tints in her coloring, the luminous clearness of a perfect skin, red flecks in her changeable eyes. There was fire beneath her languor; she had a warm rich voice with occasionally a lilt in it. And a savage note, if aroused. She was still "La belle Karesia."

His comments on her house were appreciative. He liked the arrangement of the rooms. He was utterly impersonal; asked no questions; he preceded her upstairs and he followed her down; scrupulously polite, detached. Karesia noted it with deep satisfaction. "There is this large closet under the stairs too, a convenience, though both houses have separate storerooms in the basement," Karesia told him. "I have had the walls between the two houses deadened. They are just as private and unconnected really, as if they stood on different lots. It is not one of those houses in which you can hear your neighbor think."

She opened the door into the closet under the stairs and Dascome stepped in. There was something in his attitude, a fixedness, that made her wonder. Then she realized and she, who rarely blushed, felt a smothering wave of heat: she had forgotten to close the concealed opening into her side of the house; when first startled by the sound of knocking, she had gone into the hall to listen and had left the cabinet swung back; he was looking into her hall and up her stairway. . . . And she had just declared that the two houses were quite separate!

Long ago, Karesia Kaime had learned the truth of, "He who protests too much is lost." She drew back, said nothing; walked on into the front room, seeing red.

That the opening was intended for a concealed entrance was patent at a glance, but Dascome stood for a long moment or two, looking up at the woman who was staring down at him from well up the stairway of the next house, the bent figure clinging to the stair-rail; a distorted face, dark on one side, white on the other, filmy eyes peering at him from beneath white hair. His body and face were distinct, the bright light shone on him through the closet door, turning his fair hair yellow. Karesia had glimpsed merely the fact that the entrance was open and had retreated; she had not seen Mary Bliss hovering on the stairway. . . . The figure scrambled to the landing above and vanished.

Dascome came out of the closet and closed the door. His eyes leaped to Karesia, asking questions of her back, for she was opening the front door, apparently oblivious that his lengthened inspection of the closet had disclosed anything unusual. But her bare shoulders, even the lobes of her ears were scarlet; to a trained observer, a back is as good an index of confusion as a face.

"Shall I turn out these lights?" he asked.

"If you please," she answered huskily, and went out into the moonlight, leaving him to close and lock the door. She did not pause until she gained the gallery.

Dascome joined her there. "What a night!" he said. "The beauty of this location is that if you want to rest you can look at the hills." By a motion he indicated the expanse of city below: "A turn of the head, and you can be at one with the eternal struggle."

Not the faintest trace of suggestion or amusement, the same deep even note. Karesia was grateful to him. To the clean-minded, that entrance would not be suggestive, merely a convenience to the owner, an opening that would of course be sealed up when the house was rented. Certainly she had had no other thought, no idea of spying on a tenant, or wish for a possible intrigue. The trouble was with herself, Karesia reflected, a self-consciousness engendered by unlovely experiences. This man was not that sort.

The night air cooled her cheeks. "Yes," she said in answer to him. "That is what I wanted when I built my house, a *home*, and the peace of the hills."

"WHAT do you ask for the house I have just seen? Under a year's lease and including the cottage?" he asked.

Karesia named her price.

"It is a reasonable rental. . . . I suppose it is difficult to get servants here?" Dascome added.

Karesia sighed. "I have found it so, but you may not. Money will secure service, of course."

He touched on the personal for the first time. "And are you without any help?"

Karesia thought of the doubtful assistance of Mary Bliss. "Only a poor old woman who came to me to-night asking for work. She is almost half-witted, I think—something or other the matter with her brain, for she can't remember her own name or just where she came from. She has her name written down, 'Mary Bliss,' and that she grew up in an orphans' home in Montreal, Canada. She has a fearful birthmark on one side of her face. She's simply pitiful, deadly afraid of everything, and she says some man is following her, that she knows he wants to hurt her. Whether it's true or not, I don't know, but I couldn't refuse her shelter—I am too terribly sorry for her." It was a relief to Karesia to tell him of her experience.

"Some poor unfortunate," Dascome said in his quiet way. "Possibly a case of amnesia. Will you keep her?"

"I won't let her go until I have done all I can to help her." The savage note crept into her voice. "If it's true that some man is hounding her, he's going to answer to me! I have offered her a home and I shall keep her!"

Though deep, Dascome's voice was very flexible. "It is like you to take her in," he said gently. "Not many women would do it."

Karesia calmed suddenly. He must think that she was talking rather freely to a perfect stranger. "I didn't mean to talk about my troubles. . . . I think you will have no difficulty in getting servants, if you are willing to pay high wages. I have lived in the Orient so long that I turn pale at the wages one pays here."

"My Japanese boy may be able to manage without help." Dascome paused, then asked with his quick smile, "What would you ask for the furnished side of your house, your pet stronghold?"

She thought he must be joking. "A thousand a month!" she returned lightly. "I haven't the faintest idea of letting it, Mr. Dascome."

"I will give you a thousand a month for it under a year's lease—for it and the cottage."

Karesia simply stared at him. She could not doubt him; he had lost his smile, he spoke with quiet decision. . . . But an outrageous rental like that! . . .

"But I do not want to let my home. Besides, that is too high a rental."

"It is worth that sum to me," Dascome returned steadily.

Karesia was silent: so it was her home he had wanted from the beginning. . . . She thought of her treasures, of the mellow-tinted Japanese paintings; she recalled the exquisite ceremonial of presentation, the two treasures brought from the imperial godown and unrolled before her. Memories! The room she had built for her memories! . . . But she was so desperately lonely!

"You do not want, then, to rent the unfurnished side of my house?" she asked in a voice that she strove to keep steady. She had felt so certain that he would take the house; she had felt excitedly happy.

"No. It is not adapted to my needs." His tone was final.

"I do not want to let my home," Karesia said bleakly, then caught at the reasonable excuse. "I should have to furnish the other house—I can't do that."

"It would not be necessary," Dascome said in the same quiet determined way. "I don't like to keep you standing—may I come in while I explain?"

HE OPENED the door for her and she went on to the center of the room where, unconsciously, she took hold of the back of a chair. There was such a resolute force about the man: Karesia had a strange feeling that the place belonged to him already. She felt vaguely bewildered because it had come to her so suddenly and with such certainty that, if he went, she would suffer; that she wanted him in her house, next door to her. In a very passion of loneliness, she had erected that sign, and her prayer had been answered so quickly and happily; throughout their interview, she had been inwardly quivering with excitement over the curiously quick answer; a presence that was satisfying, comforting, interesting. If she refused him, he would go, and she might never see him again. . . . She waited in silence.

She had rallied; she must look foolish standing there an image of distress. "I was so surprised at first, but I am landlady enough not to worry long over a good bargain," she said, lightly. "I do not see, though, how I am to escape investing in furniture I don't want."

"You can use my furniture." He was still smiling.

"Your furniture?"

"Yes. A carload of my household goods has just arrived. That is one reason I am looking for a furnished house—I haven't the courage to unpack that stuff. I simply can't do it. With your permission, I shall lay that burden on your shoulders—another reason for paying you an adequate rent. You can overhaul that carload and choose whatever you want for your house. There is everything there, china, silver, linen, and good furniture—take what you want of it, and the rest can be stored."

Again Karesia stared at him. "But—you don't want your own things about you?"

"No, I want your things about me."

She tried to understand; it was not dread of house-settling, it must be something more than that. Did he dislike his own belongings?

"The furniture is good," he assured her.

Karesia did not doubt it; probably it was much more valuable than hers. "I was trying to think—to imagine it," she said vaguely. Among other things, she was thinking: "His things. It would be interesting—an insight into him."

"I shall pay for the hauling and——"

"You are offering to pay enough already!" Karesia said decidedly.

"I shall meet any expense there may be," he repeated firmly. "I shall have the things put in a storehouse and you can choose from them. I want to move in as soon as possible."

Karesia was brought face to face with it;

Dascome saw her eyes go to the Japanese paintings, then drop to the rug beneath their feet. Her face quivered, then set. "It will take two days to get this house ready," she said with sudden decision. "This is Friday, you can come in on Sunday." She smiled bravely. "Both are my lucky days."

Dascome took a notebook from his pocket and wrote two addresses, then tore out the page and gave it to her. "My references," he said. "One of them is my banker." He smiled. "Rule one: 'Never sign a lease until you have investigated your prospective tenant.'" Then he brought out his pocketbook. "I want to pay a deposit and, of course, you can return it to me if you decide that I shall not make a good tenant. Any time you name to-morrow, I shall be ready to sign the lease. I want, too, to bring my daughter to see the house—may I?"

Karesia took the two bills and felt that her voice was as pleasantly businesslike as his. "Yes, certainly. I will give you a receipt." She found pen and paper, began to write, then really looked at the bills. Not many men carry five-hundred-dollar bills about with them; Dascome saw her pause in surprise. But she wrote it. "Received from Mr. John Dascome, one thousand dollars." Over her name she hesitated, then wrote it in full, "Mrs. Sonya Karesia Kaime."

Dascome looked down at her bent head, at the nape of her neck, snow-white, and the curve of her lovely shoulders; he glimpsed her face, very grave, very eager to appear businesslike and untroubled.

"There!" she said, purposely whimsical. "I think I have never made a bargain so quickly. Who says money is not an accelerator!"

Dascome looked at the bit of paper, not at her. "I—when shall you want to see my things?"

"On Monday."

"Very well. . . . And thank you, Mrs. Kaime. You have done me a kindness. It is some time since I have had a home."

But for something vaguely desolate in his expression, she might not have answered with such genuine feeling. "I hope you will be *very* happy here."

"I am undeserving of the wish—I have deprived you of your home—nevertheless, I am grateful. . . . Shall I bring my daughter to-morrow afternoon? You will have investigated me by that time?"

"Yes, to-morrow afternoon." She smiled at him and he at her.

AFTER the door had closed on Dascome, Karesia went over to the couch and sat down. She took up her fan, but held it motionless, turning her head slowly, her eyes vague, looking at the objects in the room. She saw them and was conscious of an ache, but not actively so. She felt as one does who has done something irretrievable, and realizes that she was urged to it by her heart and not her head; throughout the transaction, she had felt rather than thought. Now she was thinking rather than feeling.

She looked at the bills lying on the table. "It's done," she said aloud. "You have taken the money. . . . It's the last thing you intended doing, putting yourself out of your home. And it's all because of your everlasting loneliness. . . . He tried to explain, but there is something behind it all, and it intrigued you. And he knew perfectly well that it was not the thousand dollars a month that was putting him into your house. . . . And there is his daughter?"

Karesia ceased her mutter of words, but her thoughts ran on. His daughter was no child. What would be her attitude to all this? A strange woman surrounded by her father's possessions and she housed with a stranger's household effects! A curious arrangement it would seem, even to the incurious.

Going upstairs, Karesia opened her door softly, closed it and went over to her dresser. She took her purse from a drawer and put the bills in it; she decided that she would put it under her pillow. Then, by chance, she saw her reflection in the long mirror, and paused aghast. Her hands flew to her fiery cheeks and over them she looked at her barbaric self.

"The Pilgrim fathers have mercy on your soul!" she whispered vividly. "*You* look the embodiment of all the virtues—*not!* The dignified possessor of a double house! . . . A son of Boston and you met him like *this!*" Her hands dropped slowly and she stood staring, utterly blank. Then, suddenly, the corners of her mouth quivered and began to lift, a dancing light sifted between her lashes, and, whirling about, she dived for the bed and smothered paroxysms of laughter and speech in its covers.

THE sun was looking full in her window when Karesia woke the next morning; she had overslept. The first thing that met her eyes downstairs was the cabinet, swung back, a gaping opening into the next house. She swung it into place, disgusted with herself.

In the kitchen she found the sink cleared of china, the empty barrels piled two high, the floor swept, the tea-kettle spouting steam, and, shrinking against the wall, Mary Bliss.

"Why—Mary!" she exclaimed.

"I didn't know whether you would like it—my straightening up like this?"

"I'm so pleased! Have you had any breakfast?"

"Oh, no!" Mary Bliss said, as if such an act would have been sacrilege. "I wanted to get something for you," she admitted timidly, "but I was afraid to unlock the door."

The refrigerator was in the screened porch and the screened door was latched, but evidently Mary Bliss thought that it was not sufficient protection from the danger that threatened from without, for she had barricaded the kitchen door with barrels. Karesia made no comment, even when she saw the woman's bundle in the corner.

Karesia decided upon grape-fruit, soft-boiled eggs, and toast for breakfast, and Mary Bliss asked timidly but eagerly, "May I get it for you?"

Surreptitiously, Karesia watched while the woman prepared the meal. She could cook, but without daintiness.

The eggs were hard-boiled and the thick toast was a trial, and Karesia ate the grape-fruit as best she could. She praised Mary Bliss's efforts, for the woman watched over her devotedly.

Then, breakfast over, Karesia turned toward her paintings, her kakemonos. They were gone!

HER paintings had been stolen! The shock turned Karesia weak. All the money she had in the house, all her belongings she could have parted from and not have suffered as she was suffering now; those paintings she *loved*. . . . But who would steal them? Not one person in thousands would even guess their value; only an artist, a connoisseur. Those paintings were more than two hundred years old. Few Japanese, even, would realize their value; that was why she had felt so secure in hanging them on any wall, anywhere. . . . Whoever was clever enough to know their value, would know how to guard his theft. Her treasures were gone.

The tears rolled down Karesia's cheeks: those mellow paintings had been her friends, soothing and comforting. In the hard hours when she had wept and ached, the sight of them had comforted, made her griefs seem small things, for they had witnessed generations of grief and joy, times of battle and days of peace; the simple home life of the imperial palace, the days of intricate ceremonial, the seasons of cherry bloom, the steady downpours of the nubi; flowers and incense, the hovering presence of the great Buddha. . . . For a long space, Karesia felt merely the misery of loss.

But it stirred in her finally, the despairing feeling that she must make certain that they were not in the house; find out, if possible, how the thief had entered, do something. She searched the house; the windows were latched, all the doors were locked. She remembered that she had left the cabinet swung back the night before.

Karesia searched the other house: all the windows were fastened, the kitchen door was locked, the front door was locked—she remembered that John Dascome had locked it when they came out last night. . . . Karesia came back into her own house and heard the tinkle of silver—Mary Bliss in the kitchen—and a forlorn hope clutched her: the woman was queer and conscientious, perhaps she had taken the paintings down with the idea of dusting them.

Karesia tried to look natural. "Did you dust those long paintings in the front room this morning, Mary?" she asked.

Mary Bliss lifted her filmed eyes to her, a troubled look, as of a duty neglected. "No," she said timidly. "I was afraid to go in there without your telling me. Shall I dust there now?"

"By and by, Mary."

Karesia saw no way out, other than to call the police, though she would almost rather give up her paintings than do that.

Then it swept over her, a wave of relief: she felt herself looking into steady gray eyes and receiving quiet counsel. She must tell him, anyway; he had rented her house with the paintings there; he had said that, to him, they made the house worth a double rental. She could telephone.

The Hollywood Hotel connected her promptly with Mr. John Dascome's room, and it was his voice that answered, quiet and deep.

"Mr. Dascome—this is Mrs. Kaime."

"Yes—what has happened?"

"How did you know—anything had happened?" she asked, surprised.

"Your voice. I know trouble when I hear it, Mrs. Kaime. What is it?"

"I—I can't tell it very well over the telephone. Could you come to see me?" she asked appealingly.

"Yes—at once." He hung up his receiver before she hung up hers.

TEN minutes later, Dascome brought his car to a stop before Karesia's door. She went out on the gallery to meet him.

"It's something serious," he said rather than asked.

"Yes. But we must speak very low, I don't want Mary Bliss—I told you about her last night—I don't want her to hear." She drew him into the house. "My Japanese paintings are gone," she said with a break in her voice. "I think they were stolen last night."

Dascome glanced at the bare spaces. "I see—but who would steal them? Have you missed anything else?"

"No—that is the strange thing. If only they had taken anything else than my paintings." Her lips quivered and her eyes filled.

"I noticed them last night. They are beautiful things."

"They were the best friends I had. You rented my house with them in it and I felt I had to tell you." She looked at him through a mist of tears. "Besides, I hoped you could tell me what to do."

"I shall do the best I can. Have you notified the police?"

"No. I don't want to."

"There are other means." Dascome smiled encouragingly. "Don't feel hopeless, Mrs. Kaime. "Try not to worry. Let us look about a little. Take me into the next house—we can go through the closet, can't we?"

Dascome let her lead the way into the hall. As he passed the desk-table, he took a bunch of keys from his pocket and laid them noiselessly on the table. Then he followed her.

"I had this entrance made because I thought it would save me so many steps. Now the house is rented, I shall have it sealed up." Karesia felt no embarrassment now in explaining; she felt so certain that he understood.

"It struck me last night as a good idea," he said practically. "But I shouldn't seal it up—it would mean more carpenter work when you need to use it again. The bolt in the cabinet locks this side—simply put a fastening on the other side. I will put a bolt on for you any time you wish."

Karesia liked the way in which he said it. His very presence gave her comfort. "I may have lost my paintings, but I have gained something even better," was her reflection.

Dascome examined the windows and doors in the vacant house, and finally the kitchen. The door into the screened porch was locked, but he looked through the glass in the door. "I thought so," he said. "The screened door out there is unhooked."

"It was fastened last night," Karesia said.

"Well, it is unhooked now. And this simple lock would give a burglar no trouble."

"You think he cut through the screen and unhooked that door, then unlocked this one and locked it again when he went out?"

"It's possible."

"I must get the keys so we can see. . . . I can't remember what I did with them—you gave them to me last night, didn't you?"

"I put them on the table in the big room."

Karesia sped in quest of them, and Dascome stood where he was, head bent, his lips set in a hard line; he lifted his shoulders only when he heard her returning.

THEY went into the screened porch and he pointed out at once a small round hole in the wire screening, a short distance above the hook. "There it is, Mrs. Kaime. The wire is not even cut. Whoever came in here must have worked some small instrument through the wire and have lifted the hook out of the eye."

"Contemptible!" Karesia said passionately. "My dear kakemonos!"

She felt that she was going to weep and went off hurriedly into the other house. Dascome looked after her: in her simple gingham dress and with her heavy hair braided and wound about her head, she looked girlish, the antithesis of the serpentine dancer. Her eyes had filled and her lips quivered like those of an angry and grieving child. Dascome's face darkened and his lips set. He went back slowly and found her in the big room, self-controlled now, in spite of her reddened eyelids.

"I believe a good private detective would serve your purpose," Dascome said. "I know of a man who is capable. I believe he might find your paintings for you."

"I never thought of a detective—as usual I have been feeling more than thinking!" Karesia exclaimed.

Dascome smiled. "I told you not to worry. Shall I telephone to him for you?"

He did so; returned to say his man would come within the hour.

"Are we going to sign that lease to-day?" he asked smilingly.

"You think you want the house without the paintings?" she returned half seriously.

"Will you have investigated me by this evening and have the lease ready?"

"You were going to bring your daughter this afternoon."

"I meant to tell you. She cannot come to-day—she is going to the beach with some friends."

Dascome changed the subject then. "The name of your detective is Herbert Colt. I know him to be an honest, reliable man. Tell him every circumstance which you think has a bearing on the theft. He is certain to make a careful examination, and he will want to know all you can tell him about this woman, Mary Bliss. I should simply leave the matter in his hands then and try not to worry over it. . . . Shall I come this evening? Just after dinner?"

"Yes. And thank you very much for helping me."

Karesia had given him her hand and Dascome held it; he took it in both of his. "I have done nothing. It was kind of you to send for me. . . . I wish you would promise me not to shed any more tears over your paintings. I think Colt will get them back for you."

Karesia flushed. "Oh, I fuss a good deal over things that are not vital—I can manage to live without my paintings, you know. When I'm faced by something really vital, I'm apt to be quiet, actually restrained, though you may not think it."

"It's exactly what I do think of you—you inspire confidence."

"So do you, Mr. Dascome. That's why I sent for you."

He flushed hotly and dropped her hand, apparently deeply embarrassed. "Do I? . . . I hope you may always think so. . . . This evening, then?" he asked as he turned away.

From the gallery, Karesia watched the sure way in which he backed his car uphill, then coasted down the slope. He lifted his cap to her, and she waved in return. "I *like* him," she said to herself. It did not matter so much about the paintings; there was a circle of warmth about her heart.

"YES, Mr. Colt seemed to think that he could find my paintings," Karesia told Dascome that evening.

"Did you like him?"

She hesitated. "I did and I didn't. Yes, I liked him well enough, personally, but I didn't like his detective ways—they made me think of Rus—" She caught herself up. "He was disguised. I suppose it was necessary."

"What did he do that distressed you?" Dascome asked, with concern. He was standing beside her and Karesia sat, elbows on the table, her chin supported on her clasped hands.

She glanced up at him. "It was about Mary Bliss. I wouldn't let him talk to her." Her lips tightened. "Men must have been horribly cruel to her at some time. The iceman, a big fellow, came plunging into the screened porch just before Mr. Colt came, and I thought that Mary would die. She ran in here to me, then she stood just shaking and making queer twittering noises like a bird, then fell in a heap on the floor. It was like epilepsy. I was going to call a doctor, but she begged and begged me not to, said she was not ill, only frightened. Then she hurried around doing things, trying to show me that she was quite well again, I was afraid to get a doctor—I was afraid it would throw her into another fit. I told Mr. Colt about it when he came, and he agreed not to let her see him, but he insisted that he ought to see her, that it was important.

"So he hid himself in my room and I brought that poor thing up and set her to doing things where he could have a good view of her. . . . I suppose it was necessary, but it made me feel ill. . . . I lay down afterward, and then she crept in bringing me hot tea and she bathed my head—she was just sweet, so devoted and gentle—like a mother." Karesia's lips quivered and she looked down. "It made me feel mean!"

Dascome looked down at her bent head; then he put his hand on her shoulder. "You are tired out," he said gently, "and I am to blame for it."

Karesia turned her hot cheek to his hand, a swift impulsive movement, and withdrew it as quickly. "It is not your fault at all! Mary Bliss has made my heart ache, that's all." She drew her shoulder from his touch, but not impatiently. "Please look now at this lease and tell me if I have left you any loopholes for escape." She laughed somewhat uncertainly.

Dascome looked the document over, taking time over it. He had flushed a dull crimson; he kept his eyes on the paper until his color faded. "An expert could not have done better," he said then, in his usual quiet way.

Karesia had regained her poise also. "Our signatures must be witnessed, I suppose?"

"They should be, of course."

"I wonder who we can get?"

"Your neighbors?"

"Mercy, no! I don't want any one to know what an outrageous rent I am getting!"

Dascome laughed—child, girl, woman, both sophisticated and unsophisticated! "It can be managed. My car is out there—we can hunt up some distant witnesses—a druggist and his clerk will do. We must have a legal document, of course." He looked pleasant when he laughed; his steady eyes became whimsical.

"All I ask is to be let alone by people who don't interest me. . . . Shall we go?" She rose. "I must tell Mary Bliss not to——"

Karesia did not finish her sentence, for her front doorbell rang. "Now who can that be?" she said with annoyance. "I shall have to see." Then she laughed. "A prospective burglar—or a long-lost lover!" she said.

The last word had barely left her lips when she opened the door. Dascome had watched her go, the way she walked and held her head; he saw how she stood when the door was open, a certain rigidity, the way her hand dropped to her side. Beyond her he glimpsed the man, the sight of whom seemed to have turned her to stone; a young man, with Latin features and black hair brushed back smoothly from his forehead.

She said nothing; it was the man who spoke first and clearly. "I am not a ghost, Kara *mea*—may I enter?"

She drew back, then Dascome saw her face, blanched and carven. She had not said a word, it was the man who spoke again. He had come in with an easy swing, tall and lithe, head set on good shoulders. He lifted Karesia's hand, bent and kissed it. "*Merci bien!*" His voice was full and resonant.

Her answer was low and dull. "Rand—you surprised me."

"So I see," he answered lightly.

HIS brilliant blue eyes had sped down the room to Dascome, standing erect and expressionless by the table. They knew each other by sight; each had reason to know the other. Randsome Rossiter looked somewhat older than in the days of the Dascome trial, though he did not look his age.

Dascome saw Karesia change from a frozen white to a hot crimson. "I had forgotten that you love the erratic."

"Meaning yourself, Kara?" Rossiter returned coolly. "I have not forgotten—I came to remind you of it. After all, this is a tiny globe! Here we are—you have made something of Sonya Karesia Kaime and I should have done better for Randsome Favrique Rossiter. It's amusing—suppose we talk about it?"

It was a reminder of some sort; at any rate, Karesia gained a sort of frozen self-control. There was only the brief pause during which her eyes widened. "I have heard of Randsome Rossiter, but I never connected you with—the Rand of five years ago." She turned. "Mr. Dascome, perhaps you and Mr. Rossiter have met?"

They said that they had not met; they bowed, but did not shake hands. "I have heard of Mr. John Dascome frequently," Rossiter said. In his Irish blue eyes lay mockery half concealed, also something searching, questioning, an ill disguised antagonism.

Dascome met his gaze with fixity. "Yes?"

"I have met your daughter several times."

"So she has told me."

Rossiter turned to Karesia. "I am a neighbor of yours, Kara—from my windows across the cañon I can see yours."

She looked at him gravely. "Yes, Rossiter Hill. It was pointed out to me when I first came. It is a beautiful place."

"It will be when the trees are grown. I watched your house building—you always wanted a big studio room like this. . . . My word! The same rugs! How well I remember them! But the paintings, what have you done with them? . . . You have not changed much, Kara *mea*."

A gleam shot from beneath Karesia's drooping eyelids, a flash of defiance. "I should be delighted to give you an inventory of my modest possessions, but I have a business engagement with Mr. Dascome—we were just going out when you came. I hall go up and get my things, then you must excuse us."

She turned away, but Rossiter followed her; he said clearly: "I'll come up with you, Kara."

Dascome saw her turn on him. She had undergone a transformation: her brows had lowered, her narrowed eyes were agleam, her teeth showed a line of white. She said nothing; she looked more really the tigress because of her silence. Rossiter's face Dascome could not see, only that he drew back. Though low-spoken, he heard Rossiter's question:

"But I still have the right?"

"I do not choose to grant it!" she returned through her teeth and with such sibilant softness that Dascome barely caught it. She looked ready to spring; every atom of her supported her words.

"We will discuss that later," Rossiter said. He turned away and Karesia vanished.

Dascome watched him as he strolled up the room: Rossiter's expression was a curious mixture of anger, intense interest, and excitement. He looked like a man who had entered on an adventure urged by sheer mischief.

"Nadine Navarre is coming from New York. She is going to make her next picture here," he said, abruptly.

"So she wrote me."

"You were in Japan at the same time she was, weren't you?"

"Yes."

"I heard she had followed you there," Rossiter remarked coolly.

"YOU heard incorrectly, Mr. Rossiter. It was I who followed Madame Navarre."

"I see."

Rossiter half turned his back on him, smoked and looked at objects in the room, as if renewing acquaintance with former friends. Dascome observed him in an expressionless way: a very handsome, very facile face, but not at all effeminate; not a bad face, not a mean line in it; clean-cut, expressive, fascinating; Irish blood well mixed with southern European blood of some sort, and a healthy dash of American English. That had been Dascome's reading of him the first time he had seen him, when he was standing beside Nadine Navarre in the courtroom.

Dascome knew all that Hollywood could tell him about Randsome Rossiter; there was urgent need to know all he could about him. He had heard that Rossiter had forsaken the stage at a time when he began to be known as an actor of decided talent. Then the war had swallowed him. Some relative had left him a large fortune, and he had come to Hollywood. He could not be persuaded to enter "pictures," though he seemed to take an interest in the industry and most of his friends were motion-picture people.

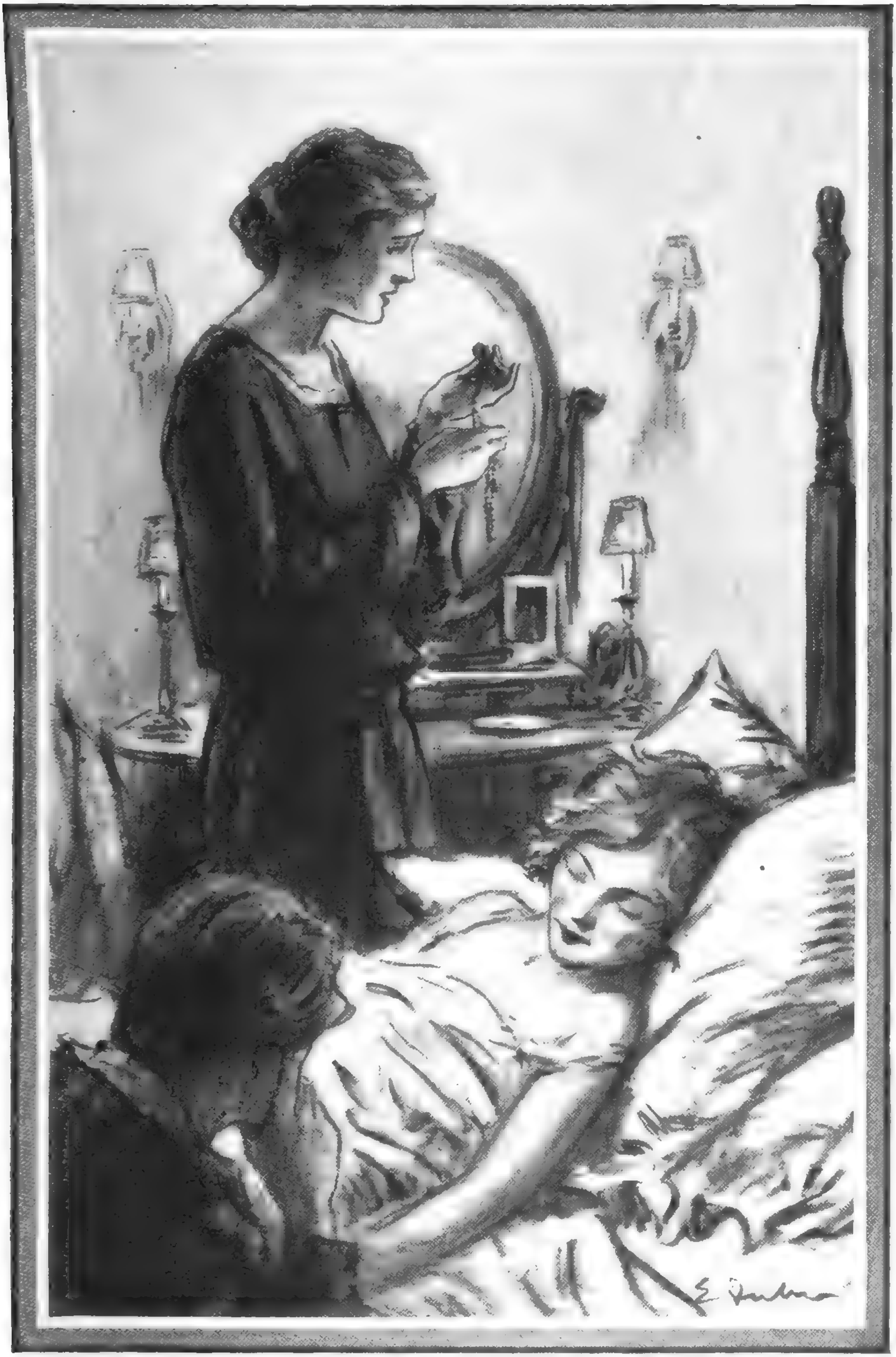
Rossiter continued to smoke and absorb Karesia Kaime's glowing room. The silence did not seem to disturb him; it was so marked that his sudden exclamation was startling: "God! What's that!"

Dascome's eyes followed his gesture. It was Mary Bliss in the dining-room, peering at Rossiter as she had peered at Dascome the night before from the stairway. Dascome merely glimpsed her before she shrank and vanished.

Rossiter looked at him with widened eyes. "Lord! A woman. . . . What's the matter with her face?"

"A birthmark, I believe."

"Mrs. Kaime's chaperone?" Rossiter



It was not a woman's face framed in the gold; it was Rossiter's face—as he had looked at her only a few moments before.

asked sarcastically. Then his look softened. "Kara, unchanged! Was there ever a crippled dog that didn't crawl to her hand and lick it! Man, woman, and dog, she takes them in without question and shelters them, forgetting that her hand may be bitten in return."

John Dascome said nothing. If Rossiter's contempt reached him, he showed no sign; evidently Rossiter was aware that Karesia Kaime did not know John Dascome's history. What Dascome thought of the things he had witnessed and had overheard, could not be judged by his expression—he had no expression.

Karesia joined them then. A red cape wrapped her and on her little toque quivered a slender red feather that curved and darted like a serpent. She showed no trace of her recent excitement; she was perfectly composed.

"Red, of course, Kara," Rossiter said, and not in a mocking way. "I spied that serpentine feather, then your face yesterday. I had supposed that you were still on the other side of the earth—somewhere. You passed me on the Boulevard, driving a shining little sedan and looking as tense as if you expected all four wheels of your car were going to come off and drop you into the street. . . . You look more at home in a jinrikisha, dear. A red cloak and a red plume and the pat-a-pat of the rickshaw man, Kara?" His manner was genuinely tender.

A slight quiver crossed her face, and her eyes dropped. "It's true—I do not enjoy driving a car. . . . You drove, I suppose?"

"Yes—Mrs. Kaime."

There was the mocking note again, and she turned away. "Let us go then."

They went out together, and Rossiter took her arm and helped her down the steps and into Dascome's car as if it was his right. Then he stood beside her.

"I am coming again," he said firmly.

Karesia gave him no answer; gathered her cape about her and looked straight ahead. The only sign Dascome showed of the white heat within him was the way in which he backed his car; so sharply that Rossiter had to spring aside.

AS THEY coasted down the slope, after parting from Rossiter, Dascome asked Karesia, "Shall we choose Beverly for our adventure?"

"Yes," she said absently.

They rode then in silence. Dascome knew that she was tense, her thoughts busied with Rossiter. He saw that her hands gripped her cape and that her arms were held tightly to her sides. Evidently now she was faced by something really vital, and, as she had promised, she was restrained.

They had gone many blocks, when she asked abruptly, "What do you think of marriage, Mr. Dascome?"

He had expected her to begin in some such way; he knew that she was pondering a problem difficult to solve. "That is a large question," he returned. "Specialize a little."

"I mean—I was thinking—how much should one forgive—a husband, or wife?"

"You mean, how much *can* a wife forgive a husband?" he corrected quietly. "Isn't it largely a matter to be decided by the individual? Haven't our laws recognized that it is? What one woman can forgive, another may be utterly unable to forgive without doing violence to herself, mentally and morally. Our laws have made that common-sense concession to the individual, to the individualistic idea. No doubt many individuals abuse our divorce laws, but they are a small number in comparison to the multitude who, in times past, have been abused by unindividualistic laws. At least, that is my feeling."

"It is what I have felt," she said, and sank into silence.

Dascome waited. When she aroused again, it might be to tell him to turn about and take her home; tell him that she could not rent her house to him. He wondered how much she would explain.

Karesia broke the silence finally. "Are you quite certain that you want my house, Mr. Dascome? You haven't changed your mind? You are satisfied?"

"I am very certain that I want it. I am not merely satisfied, I am grateful."

Her voice was quietly resolute. "We will sign the lease, then."

Dascome drew an inaudible breath. He did not look at her for a few moments. When he did, he saw that she had relaxed; her entire expression had changed.

"It was a white night last night, wasn't it? To-night there is a foggy moon." Her voice had the sweet lilt which was one of her charms.

"There has been a high fog all evening, now it is coming in low—from the ocean. Will you be chilly? . . . I have a robe in the locker—shall I put it around you?"

"No, I am quite warm."

"But have you noticed?" he said, pointing.

They were beyond Marmount. The hills on their right loomed into a misty, half-lighted sky; below them the broad valley reached into a billowy, pallid cloud which was rolling along rapidly, and, on its valley-wide route, lights that had twinkled insistently vanished. Objects in the half-moonlit space below lost substance quickly; they looked down now on what seemed a gulf filled with vapor. A few moments, and the fleecy chill touched them, enveloped them, and the lights of their car shone on wispy, floating moisture. The road grew indistinct and the lights of the occasional cars that passed them seemed to be groping for expression through an impalpable veil.

"Are you nervous?" Dascome asked.

Her voice was confident. "Not with you."

"We have only a little farther to go. We needn't go clear to Beverly."

They glided down a slope, turned a bend, then climbed toward a pinkish glow. Dascome brought his car to a stop just short of the glow, on a bit of level beside the road which, in that woolly fog, Karesia would never have discovered, but which either his keener eye or his instinct found for him. Karesia could see neither the stores nor the houses, only the glow which their lighted windows cast on the fog. The headlights of cars drawn up before the stores added to the pinkish glow, though the cars were wrapped in the universal shroud. Probably their drivers had taken counsel of caution and were waiting for the fog to lift.

"Will you wait here while I reconnoiter?" Dascome asked. "I think the drug store may be crowded with people from these waiting cars. I shall be back soon." And he disappeared in the fog.

KARESIA had been thinking steadily and she continued to think. The past had struck her full in the face; it had been like the return of the dead. There was a hot hand pressing on her heart; after all those years to walk into her house and assert his claim! Purposely do it in the presence of another man! An exhibition of anger and jealousy, a sort of mocking reminiscence tinged with tenderness. In her lonely hours, she had dreamed of some such return, had half wanted it; in her angry and restless moments, she had decided to throw that past to the winds. In moments when courage was low, she had reminded herself that she was hand-tied; better to go on with life as it was—until love entered it again. There had always been that resolution beneath all her uncertainty; she would take love when it came to her, fight for it, free herself—if she could.

Was Rossiter going to try to revive the past? Could it be revived? Wasn't it simply a fascination that had had its day and had passed? The sense of comfort, of confidence, of reliance upon strength that had swept through her when she had laid her cheek against Dascome's hand! Karesia sat upright and gathered her cape about her; she had made her decision when she had said, "We will sign the lease then." The words had meant to her, "I shall go straight on—the future shall decide."

Dascome found her sitting very erect. "There are people in the drug store, consoling themselves with soft drinks, but there is a little grocery this side where there is no one but the proprietor and his wife. We can go there."

He helped her out of the car and when his hand touched her cape he said with concern: "This fog is like rain—a little more and you will be wet through. I shouldn't have let you come."

It was a joy to Karesia, his air of concern; the careful way in which he guided her through the fog. "I don't take cold easily," she assured him.

The proprietor of the grocery was a lanky dry-faced man. He read the lease carefully before he affixed his signature, and allowed his wife to affix hers.

Dascome had helped her into the car, he was about to get in himself, when sounds bore down on them; the humming purr of a car driven fast, men's voices and women's shrill speech and laughter. As the oncoming car plunged into the pinkish glow, a man's hoarse voice shouted, "Hey, there, soft drinks!" and the men laughed and the women shrieked.

Out of the glow, the car plunged like a rearing thing, its nose passed them by a short yard and its fender almost caught theirs, almost struck Dascome, and in the instant of passing, a man yelled, "Damn you, kid—you'll smash us yet!" And back to Karesia and Dascome was borne the girl's answer, shrill with abandon: "Yah! Keep your hair on! I'm going to Los Angeles, I tell you!"

Dascome was half in his seat; at the girl's scream of defiance, he whirled about and to the ground, stood staring at the red eye which winked but for a moment, then was swallowed by the fog. Then Karesia heard his passionate exclamation: "Oh, my *God!* What damnable, what *wicked* recklessness!"

Fright had brought the smothering blood into Karesia's face; a few inches more and that girl would have killed him; a foot or two more and they would all of them have been a mangled heap. She shivered and gasped. Then Dascome swung himself back into his car and whirled it about; Karesia thought that in his anger he meant to chase the car whose muffled roar was dying in the distance, and her heart stood still with terror. They made a veritable plunge into the fog. The next moment, the brakes shrieked, the car slid a foot or two—then crawled. Dascome circled the bend; how he kept to the road, Karesia could not understand, for she saw nothing but wavering veil upon veil of floating moisture.

DASCOME was driving slowly now. He turned to her; Karesia felt his hand on her shoulder. "Forgive me," he said thickly. "I was—something more than angry. You were terrified, but you never cried out. I am sorry. I shall drive very carefully." His groping hand passed across her shoulders, brought the front of her cape together, hovered over her in an eagerness of reassurance. "There is no danger now."

Her lips were stiff. "Those people had been drinking."

"Yes," he said through his teeth.

"She doesn't realize—she can't!"

"She's suffering for the sins of her parents," he said with husky vehemence. "Thank God, you were not sacrificed. She'll ride to her death some day, I am afraid!"

"Do you know her?" Karesia asked, surprised.

"Yes. I know them all. It's the contemptible hangers-on to this motion-picture industry that make such things possible!"

Karesia watched him, the vague outline of his face which, she felt rather than saw, was gray and drawn. She watched the movement of his head from side to side, as if, at any moment, at the edge of the road, he expected to see an overturned hulk. She sat silent; it had come to her suddenly who that girl was—what she was to him.

They had come into West Hollywood and the fog was lighter. The streets were like oiled glass; only an occasional car passed, driven very slowly. Karesia had decided what she would do.

"Look at these streets!" she exclaimed. "Don't turn up to the Boulevard. Please let me out and I shall walk up to my house."

Dascome glanced at her quickly. "I shall have no trouble with your hill."

"I couldn't endure a skid!" she declared. "I want to walk. It is early—there is not a bit of danger."

He gave her a long look, then looked away. "Perhaps it would be as well." He drew to the curb and Karesia got out. "I shall telephone," he said.

"Yes—do," she answered, as if they were both talking about her house.

A few steps, and Karesia looked back. He was racing on that oiled glass! She choked up as she watched his car slither out of sight. He was chasing that mad car, anger and bitter anxiety driving him along. So that was his daughter!

DASCOME did not follow the car; by the most direct route and at the risk of his neck, he raced to the Hollywood Hotel.

It was the night of the weekly dance, in a foyer not half large enough for the weekly attendance. To-night it was more crowded than usual, for the fog had driven in from the veranda couples who felt inclined to wander and the stags, who were usually massed about the only entrance and exit allowed the hotel guests, now barricaded the entrance on the inside. To jazz shrieked under a low ceiling, couples moved en masse, in elbow-to-elbow intimacy, a laughing, happy-go-lucky company of near-stars and movie-writers and movie attachés, for the most part, with here and there a luminary or an author making his or her plunge into motion-picturedom.

Dascome had sampled it all before. Several girls smiled at him over their partners' shoulders and he smiled his quick smile in return. What he wanted was to reach the hotel desk, no easy undertaking.

"Has my daughter been in this evening?" he asked the clerk when his agility had brought him finally to his goal.

The man who knows everything and is paid to maintain an inscrutable face said: "No, Mr. Dascome, we haven't seen her. Mr. Rossiter was here a little while ago asking for her and we couldn't raise her."

"She is with friends at the beach, but I thought possibly they had come in for the dance," Dascome said casually. "I am going into town and, should a message come for me, I can be reached by telephone. Kindly write it down." Dascome gave him the number.

When he turned away, the clerk looked at the telephone operator and raised his brows. "Don't wonder he's worried," he remarked, and she looked after Dascome, her face grave.

As soon as Dascome reached his car, his casual air departed. He drove swiftly to the nearest garage. "Put on my chains, will you?" he said. "May I use your telephone?"

"Sure."

Dascome shut himself up in the office and called the Los Angeles number which he had given to the hotel clerk. The answer was immediate. "Bert! I thought you'd be there," Dascome said. "Are you free for the night?"

"Yes, J. D. Making some notes for you. What's up?"

"It's Clarice, Bert—gone to Los Angeles, I think—a party. I met them this side of Beverly. Fog and road terrible. With her driving, they may get there—at any rate, no word of an accident yet. They will have reached town about now. All lighted, Bert. Make a round of the restaurants, will you? Find them. Get her away somehow—don't wait for me. You can telephone me at your place. I'm starting from Hollywood now. I have the key."

"Who's she with?" was the answer.

"The Seth Cairnses, I think—another man and woman, and Al Deeme. Anything may happen."

"I should say so! All right, J. D."

It was ten o'clock. Five minutes later, Dascome was on his way. The fog had melted into a drizzle; the going was dangerous. Dascome saw one car turn a complete circle and strike a tree on the curb with a crash that meant a smashed rear. A woman screamed and a man swore, but Dascome did not pause. Farther on, he passed a group collected about a pile of automobile wreckage with an ambulance standing by. He slowed to fifteen—there were policemen in the group. When hidden by the curve, he raced on.

Dascome stopped before an old building of three stories on the north side of the courthouse square. The first two stories housed business offices. He climbed two flights to the upper story and unlocked a door. He entered a front room which was fitted up as combined living-room and office, a large, well furnished room. Double doors opened into a dining-room; a hall led to other rooms. Herbert Colt lived here.

Dascome sat down at the desk, his eyes on the telephone. Beneath it, as if placed there for his notice, were several sheets of paper neatly typed, the notes Colt had mentioned. Dascome took up the first sheet, which was headed, "Mary Bliss," and bore the following notes:

"MARY BLISS, aged three, received in St. Catherine's Orphans' Home, Montreal, Canada, January, 1867. Child of vagrant couple, both drunkards.

"Moron. Height five feet, eyes blue, hair brown. Birthmark on left side of face. Taught to read and write with difficulty, incapable of arithmetic. Defective memory. No indication of evil tendencies. Amiable disposition, honest, and plodding worker. At age of sixteen, placed as servant with farmer's family near Montreal. Gave satisfaction. Remained with same family as long as institution held guardianship. (In this institution, after age of eighteen, no record kept of children placed by them in homes.)

"(Above record sent me in answer to my telegram. Have no data on Mary Bliss between the years 1882 and 1918. The following information was given me by Mr. and Mrs. George Waters.)

"In the summer of 1918, a woman came to their farm near Buffalo, New York, asking for work. She appeared half-witted. One side of her face was disfigured. Did not intend to keep her, but became attached to her. She seemed to have little or no memory, no memory for names, and remembered only immediate happenings. In a notebook she had written, 'My name is Mary Bliss and I grew up in an Orphan Asylum in Montreal, Canada.' Also, 'The mark on my face is a birthmark.' Could not remember when or how she came into the States. Said she had worked on many farms—had walked distances looking for work. Pitifully timid. Showed deadly fear of any man who came to the farm. Very queer, but no harm in her. Very fond of animals, particularly if they were crippled or hurt in any way. A devoted nurse when there was sickness in the family.

"In 1920, Waters family came to California, to ranch near Los Angeles. Brought Mary Bliss with them. Two months ago, sold ranch and came to city. Found work for Mary Bliss on a neighboring ranch. Short time ago, received letter from people of this ranch, saying that Mary Bliss had disappeared one night and they thought she had gone because they had taken in two ranch hands to board. Mary Bliss had shown great fear of the two men. Waters said that in the four years Mary Bliss had been with them, the woman had aged rapidly and, though she had never had any real illness, they were afraid she would not live long."

Dascome folded the paper and put it into his pocket, his brows drawn in a frown. Then he took up the other sheet, which was headed, "Randsome Favrique Rossiter":

"Randsome Favrique, born 1887, New York City, son of Jules Favrique and Alice Rossiter. Orphan at age of five. Reared by his uncle, James Rossiter, manufacturer of hardware, Newark, New Jersey. (James Rossiter was unmarried and wealthy at time he adopted his nephew. Later, during war, made immense amount of money in war supplies.)

"Randsome Favrique, called Rossiter after adoption. One year in Yale. Left college to study for the stage. Uncle opposed. Disowned by uncle. Penniless in New York. Gained living by dancing in cabarets. Attracted attention of Nadine Navarre, who gave him part in her play, 'The Two Masks.' Played with her in 'The Tokyo Geisha.' Played leading part in 'Bachelors' Quarters.' Play great success, ran two years in New York. The last year Rossiter went to pieces. Drink. Had signed up with Hermann Zackritz for lead in new play. Zackritz repudiated contract because of Rossiter's habits. Rossiter down and out—never sober. Disappeared from New York. 1917, came back to New York. Enlisted. Served in France. Good record. Spring of 1919, uncle died. Inherited uncle's fortune. Autumn of 1919, came to California and established his residence in Hollywood. Thirty-five years old. Throughout stage career and since has passed as unmarried. Has had many affairs, but no scandal. The usual sort of thing—nothing mean about him. Clever and a good sort. Never touches liquor now. Prominent in motion-picture colony. Knows many authors.

"(The name 'Favrique,' in the report sent on from New York, recalled something to me. I telegraphed San Francisco to-day and got answer. There is a San Francisco marriage record, year 1917: 'Randsome Favrique, 30, to Karesia Kaime, 23.')"

Dascome put the paper down and rose abruptly. He walked about, head bent and hands clasped behind his back. Then he thrust the window-shade up and looked out. The moon was overcoming the fog. From his elevation, he could look down Broadway; there was no automobile within a block. He left the window and looked at his watch; it was after eleven. For another half hour, he walked the floor, deliberately, evenly, his face set like stone, a teeth-gritted immobility. Once the telephone rang and he sprang to it. The operator said, "Please excuse mistake." Then he sat down, sat absolutely motionless, looking straight ahead at nothing.

IT WAS nearly one o'clock when the door opened and Herbert Colt came in, and not as he had called on Karesia; tall and rugged, an unusually long face and small eyes. He was well clothed, and protected by a well-cut ulster. Dascome's strained ears had heard him before he reached the door and he was standing when Colt came in.

"Couldn't come any sooner," Colt said rapidly. "I found them—that is, the party—after a hunt. I got word of them first at Salome's. The proprietor wouldn't let them have a table—they were too much over. He heard them say, 'We'll go to Deeme's.'

I walked in on them at Deeme's house. It was an all-night party, all right! Clarice wasn't there. I got it out of Seth Cairns, finally, that Rand Rossiter came in a little before twelve and got Clarice out and into his car—said he was taking her home——"

Dascome had flamed scarlet. "Damn him! Was she badly gone?"

"Pretty bad, J. D."

Dascome seized his hat and sprang for the door. "Why in hell didn't you telephone me!"

Colt whirled against the door. "Hold on! You're not going out of here till you've heard me! Listen, J. D.! He's no saint, but he's not a rotter—I've investigated enough to know that."

"It's Clarice I'm afraid of, Bert!"

"She was drunk, I tell you!" Colt said with brutal exactness. "She didn't know who she was with—he all but carried her out. Now hear me! He took her away a little before twelve. I didn't get there till twelve. It took me twenty minutes to get it out of Cairns and Deeme. I put a crimp in their hilarity, you bet—they'll talk about it among themselves, but not to others. I scared them stiff and sick. Now, by that time, Rossiter would have gotten to Hollywood. I wouldn't telephone you, you'd do some wild thing. Call up the hotel, J. D. If she isn't there, call his house. If he's not there—well, we'll have to do the next best thing."

Dascome took up the telephone, breathing heavily, but Colt took it from him. "Give it to me—you're not fit——

"Can you give me Mr. John Dascome?" he asked of the hotel.

The answer was, "We can't raise Mr. Dascome."

"Give me Miss Clarice Dascome then, please—I want to give her a message. It's important."

There was another pause; then: "Miss Dascome doesn't answer. She has been out all evening."

"His number is——" Dascome began.

"I know it." Colt called the number. In the few minutes' wait, he said to Dascome, "I know his Jap."

The answer from the Rossiter house came in broken English, "Mr. Rossiter not home."

"Where is he?"

"I dunno."

"Is that you, Tony?" Colt asked pleasantly. "This is bunco-man—remember?"

"Hi!" Spoken by a Japanese, the word is expressive. "Where you stay now?"

"In Los Angeles. Say, Tony, I want to talk to Mr. Rossiter right away—very important. Tell him to come to the phone."

"He not here!" the Japanese said positively. "He go away after dinner and tell me he come back by twelve o'clock and I get supper for people. Few minutes ago he telephone he come in little while and I not get supper. I think he come back soon."

"Did he say he was in Hollywood, Tony?"

"I think in Hollywood, for he say, 'In few minutes, I come.' "

"All right, Tony. And, Tony, I'll telephone you sometime and you come to see me. I saw your brother in San Francisco."

"Hi! Yes, I come."

Colt rang off. "Well, J. D.?"

"I'm going to his house," Dascome said. He was perfectly calm now.

"It's the only thing to do, I suppose. I don't understand the man—he knows he'll have to answer to you."

Dascome drew a short breath, but said nothing. They went down to his car.

WHEN the door closed on Dascome, Colt sprang out of the car and passed around to the side of the house.

He skirted the drawing-room and sought the library wing. The rooms were lighted and the shades undrawn; Colt saw Dascome pass through the drawing-room, preceded by the Japanese boy. Before Dascome entered the library, Colt had reached a library window. It was open; it was too warm a night for much fire, yet there was a lively blaze in the deep wide fireplace. Before it, stretched out in a chair, in apparently indolent ease, was Rossiter, in smoking-jacket and slippers. He showed not the slightest interest in Dascome's approaching footsteps, which Colt heard plainly enough. He did not turn his head, even, until the Japanese boy reached his chair and spoke to him.

Then he rose, cigarette in hand. "Mr. Dascome . . . I thought probably you would come."

"I tried to get you by telephone, but was unable."

"I came in only a few minutes ago."

There was a long library table between

them; Colt was glad there was; both men were so dangerously calm.

"I learned this evening that my daughter had gone into town with the Seth Cairnses and a party and that they had been drinking," Dascome explained evenly. "I reached town as soon as I could and found that you had very kindly taken my daughter away. As she is not at the hotel, I came to you."

Over the cigarette held between his fingers, Rossiter looked at him. "Yes? . . . I called at Al Deeme's house this evening and saw how things were. I might have been able to warn you—Al Deeme's crowd are apt to go to any lengths—but I knew that you were in your car somewhere with Mrs. Kaime, doubtless enjoying the fog. . . . You were rightly informed—I brought Miss Dascome away, for she was incapable of doing anything for herself. Naturally, there was no place in town where it would be wise to take her, so I"—he turned deliberately and flicked the ash from his cigarette into the fire, turned and looked into Dascome's gray face and steady eyes—"so I brought her out here."

Colt caught his breath. It was damnable, Rossiter's resonant-voiced deliberation, his determined application of hot iron to a man who was using all the will he possessed to refrain from violence. Colt braced himself for a spring through the window; Rossiter did not realize his danger.

But Dascome's question was even more steadily delivered: "You brought her here—to your house?"

Rossiter raised his brows. "Of course not. . . . I left Deeme's at ten minutes to twelve and reached Mrs. Kaime's at twenty minutes past, a quick journey. It occurred to me that Mrs. Kaime was the safest person to whom to entrust your daughter."

Colt was utterly surprised. Apparently Dascome was not; if Rossiter expected amazement, or consternation, he was disappointed; Dascome's voice was perfectly even. "I felt almost certain that you had taken her there, but I did not like to disturb Mrs. Kaime at so late an hour until I was sure. Also, I wanted to thank you for rescuing my daughter from a bad situation. Whatever your motive, I am indebted to you, and my thanks are genuine."

ROSSITER'S eyes did not lose their contempt, nor his voice its resonance. "It is unnecessary to thank me for a thing which afforded me much pleasure, Mr. Dascome." And he bowed.

Dascome bent his head. Then he turned and made his way through the drawing-room. The Japanese was waiting at the front door and opened it for him.

Colt slipped from beneath the window and gained the car before Dascome did. Dascome got in without a word; it was Colt who spoke. "You're going to Mrs. Kaime's, I suppose? I heard it all, J. D. I wanted to be on hand if there was a fight. . . . What's his game?"

Dascome drew an impatient breath. "Mrs. Kaime . . . I was there this evening, when he appeared, evidently their first meeting in five years."

"Oh! . . . It was five years ago they were married—do you think they're still married?"

"Yes—I think so."

Herbert Colt would have liked to ask bluntly, "Have you been mad enough to fall in love with Mrs. Kaime?" But, well as he knew John Dascome, there was a line he never overstepped. "It's a complication you didn't bargain for when you took her house," he remarked, instead.

"I signed the lease, nevertheless—after I knew."

"Draw out of it, J. D. We've gotten out of it about all we can for the present."

"I haven't gotten out of it all I mean to."

Colt did not know what to make of the answer. His audible comment was: "She doesn't know yet, and he has taken the first step toward discrediting you. If I'm a judge of a man's eye, he won't stop at much."

"Let him. I have a perfect right to be Mrs. Kaime's tenant."

Colt knew better than any one else the indomitable will of the man beside him; how steadily and relentlessly and patiently he could hold to a purpose. John Dascome would not stop at much. Colt frowned at the darkness; he had been anxious ever since he had seen Karesia Kaime. "She struck me as a woman who'd care a deal for a man, if she cared at all."

Dascome said nothing.

"Was she surprised to see him, J. D.?"

"Very much so, I judged."

"Glad to see him?"

"I should say that, after her surprise wore off, she was not certain how she felt about it."

"He cares," Colt said with conviction. "A good bit of 'deviltry,' as you said, but that man wants his wife back and he means to get her. He has that look about him."

"It should have occurred to him before."

Colt was so anxious that he ventured on personal ground. "How about Clarice?" he asked.

He felt Dascome stiffen. "No one can prevent Clarice from climbing her Gethsemane. . . . Perhaps the sooner she realizes the truth the better."

"Maybe." Then Colt burst out. "But, J. D., for God's sake find some safer place for—you know—Mary Bliss! I say it's dangerous, all of you there together. There's no telling what will happen."

"She's safer there, for the present, than she would be anywhere else, and she's having kind treatment," Dascome returned coolly. "I shall be there—on watch."

Colt drew a short breath. "Maybe you can stand it; I couldn't. . . . You haven't changed your mind? You want me to go to Canada?"

"Just as quickly as you can get there. Your check will be honored for any amount that's necessary. Keep me informed, and I shall attend to this end of it."

"Let me out in the next block then. There's a garage just below. I'll get a car and get back to town. I'll start in the morning."

"Better send a telegram to Mrs. Kaime from San Francisco, Bert."

"I will."

They shook hands when they parted, a firm clasp. Then Dascome bent forward, his steadfast eyes on Colt. "Don't forget that it's nearly seven years since that sixth of April, Bert."

Colt studied him gravely in the uncertain light. "I see. . . . Well—you've dared and won out once before, J. D. . . . Good luck to you."

"And to *you*, Bert."

KARESIA was not asleep when Rossiter brought his limp burden to her door. She had built a fire in the big room. Mary Bliss had crept to her own room long ago.

It had been all very well to say, under the spur of excitement, "I shall go straight on—the future shall decide," but, the more Karesia had pondered, the more certain she became that to go straight on would be terribly difficult; so much depended on Rossiter's attitude, and, so far, Karesia could not fathom his intentions. Her thoughts were anxious enough, but really what was keeping her awake and watchful was the hope of a message from Dascome, some relief from suspense. For, with eyes opened or closed, she saw him racing along those glassy streets, chasing that mad girl, tearing along to destruction.

Karesia had been asking of the fire questions she could not answer, while her ears strained for the telephone, when she heard heavy steps on the gallery. Could it be Dascome? . . . She reached the door before Rossiter had had time to knock. When Karesia opened the door, he was shifting his burden so as to free one hand. For an instant, she thought it was Dascome; she had no doubt as to the girl. Then she saw Rossiter's face and stood petrified; for a moment, she could not grasp even his peculiar greeting:

"You don't mean to say you're alone! Doubtless he will appear later. . . . Meantime here is a reminder, Kara *mea*—we'll see whether time has made you a little more human." He stepped in with his burden hanging limp over his shoulder.

Even then, Karesia had not realized. "Rand! . . . Is she hurt much? What——"

"Hurt!" he said sharply. "No. She's drunk—like any mere man! If you want to pack your grip and run, just say so and I'll find some woman who's not so much of a saint that she has no sympathy for a sinner." His vivid blue eyes blazed with scorn and anger. He let his burden slip from his shoulder into his arms and the girl's head dropped back, her fair face, hot and flushed, turned full to the light. "John Dascome's daughter, Kara dear—what shall I do with her?"

As usual, Karesia calmed quickly. "I know who she is, Rand. I am glad she wasn't killed. . . . Bring her up to my room." She led the way swiftly.

Rossiter had carried Clarice up and had laid her on Karesia's bed, his lips tight, his eyes smoldering. "You see, Kara, even girls ail in this way, occasionally—sad but true."

"Shall I telephone for a doctor?" Karesia asked.

"A doctor! No. She'll sleep it off, as I would, or any one else. Put a little cracked ice on her forehead. Sleep will do the rest." He bent and put back gently the hair which had fallen over Clarice's face. "Poor little kid! Don't I know what it's like! . . . A cloth wrung out in ice water would be better, Kara."

Karesia turned and almost fell over Mary Bliss, who stood shrinking and shaking in the doorway. She caught Karesia's arm. "What has he done to her?" she asked convulsively. "That—*man!*"

"Hush!" Karesia said. "He is being kind to her! Get the basin in your room and some towels while I get the ice. She has been drinking too much, Mary—that's all."

Mary Bliss scrambled back into her room and Karesia sped downstairs. When she returned, Rossiter was standing, looking about him, at the appointments of her room, the touches of red and orange. When Mary Bliss slid in, hiding herself behind Karesia as much as possible, he looked at her, watched her with interest as she knelt beside the bed. Though evidently in shrinking terror of him—the glance she stole over her shoulder was akin to horror—she seemed more capable in such an emergency than Karesia. He caught her mumbled demand, "Tell him to go away!" It was she who began to unhook Clarice's dress.

"I'll wait downstairs," he said, and turned on his heel.

Rossiter went into the big room and waited, his lips compressed, his eyes brilliant—until Karesia came down. He heard her at the telephone, calling up the Hollywood Hotel and asking for Dascome. Then he heard her call a city number. She received no answer, and came back into the hall.

He looked at her. "He will be along presently, Kara. Don't get impatient."

Karesia paid no attention to the sneer. "Do you know where he is? He ought to be told that she is safe."

"I haven't the faintest idea where he is. I expected to find him here."

Karesia held herself to composure. "He said he would telephone. I was afraid one or the other of them would be killed."

"Better if he had passed out seven years ago."

KARESIA did not dare to ask him why he was exhibiting such bitter jealousy and antagonism; he might veer to an attitude that would cause her far more embarrassment. She understood perfectly why he had brought Dascome's daughter to her in that condition, but she could not understand why, after all these years, it should matter to him what she did, or whom she favored. She could not fathom his motives: that he loved her still, in his headlong fashion, was less believable than that he had hardened into an ugly-spirited, revengeful man. She did not know what to say or do. She said nothing, simply looked into the fire.

Rossiter thrust his clenched hands into his pockets. "Mr. Dascome will learn what happened, then call upon me," he said in the same hard mocking way. "I shall send him to you then, Kara *mea*—that is, if he doesn't put a bullet into me first—or try to choke the life out of me. After all, she is his daughter, and he may think I haven't treated her very well—in his place, I'd be inclined to do the same. . . . Well, we'll see." He turned to the door.

Karesia looked up in swift terror. She had been thinking of Dascome's anxiety, not of the construction he might put on Rossiter's act. She had a sudden vision of Dascome enraged, a lion attacking a panther, Rossiter tearing at Dascome's strong hands! She ran after him and caught his arm. "Rand! Don't quarrel with him, please! Please don't! He doesn't know you as I do, or he wouldn't think such a thing—not for a minute!"

Rossiter stopped under her clinging hands, looked down into her quivering face. "Which one of us are you agonizing over?" he demanded. "Tell me that first."

"Over you both."

"It's not the answer I want."

He had shaken her off and had reached the door and Karesia could think of but the one way. It was plain enough now, the thing she had been unable to believe was true. "If you want to kill every atom of my love for you, go ahead. Just remember that I shall never see you or speak to you again." And she walked away from him.

Rossiter sprang after her, caught her and turned her about, lifted her face to his. "Now—tell me—the truth!" he said, breathing quickly. "You still love me? There is no one else?"

"You are my husband," she answered through stiff lips. "I have never forgotten it."

His face changed completely. He drew her to him and kissed her, eyes and cheeks, lips and throat. He looked down at her passive in his arms, and suddenly he laughed, thickly and curtly. "Love!" he said. "For a minute, I thought it was true! It's only your conscience—not your heart!"

He loosed her and Karesia stood, head bent, quivering and silent.

Rossiter studied her, his face hardening into determination. "Understand me, Kara! I want from you what I never had, the thing that sees a man through, for better or for worse. There's a deal to undo, but no other man is going to take my chance away from me—I have the first right, and I mean to keep it."

Though shaking from head to feet, Karesia held to her purpose. Her head lifted. "The future will decide that. I'm not the girl who married you five years ago. What you have become, your own conduct will show. I haven't and I never will have anything to give to a taunting, revengeful spirit. If you choose, you can quarrel with a man who has done you no harm, you can advertise the fact that you married me five years ago, you can make it difficult for me and disagreeable for yourself—and lose the chance you say you want. Love can't be forced—it's a thing that's given."

The mocking light sprang into his eyes. "And to whom were you preparing to give it, Kara *mea*—when I appeared on the scene?"

Karesia looked down, lips set, cheeks burning.

Rossiter looked at her mass of hair which he had disordered, at the nape of her neck, fresh and sweet as a child's. "God! I'd like to tell you a few things instead of letting you learn them!" he exclaimed with a touch of desperation. "If you weren't the sort you are, I'd do it! I believe your treatment of me is the one exception in your entire life . . . Perhaps it's remorse that has made you tender to every stray dog that comes your way. Is it?"

"I have been sorry, Rand—many times," Karesia said in a smothered way. "I wrote you that I was sorry."

ROSSITER'S entire expression changed. "*You* wrote to *me!* I swear I never received it!" He grew white. "I have never had a word from you from that day to this! . . . Kara, when did you write to me?"

She looked at him, grown as white as he. "I wrote when my boat reached Honolulu!"

"To San Francisco? To Randsome Favrique?" he asked swiftly.

"Yes. To the hotel where we were."

"To Randsome Favrique, of course! And I had gone. I went to New York and enlisted, as Randsome Rossiter. I left no address at the hotel. My Lord! If only I'd had the courage to tell you that I'd been on the stage, all that history of mine. I ought to have told you before we were married. But I was afraid you would distrust me. Before I met you, I'd stopped drinking. I wasn't going back to the stage—I was going to take you to Uncle Rossiter's and begin all over again. The day we were married, I decided I'd tell you all about it; and then I took a drink to brace me, and well, you know the rest. . . . Kara, did you write that you would come back to me?"

"Yes."

It was hard for her to say it—how hard, Rossiter could see plainly enough, and that she dreaded the thing she expected him to say in return.

He looked down, stood in profound thought. When he looked up, he was smiling faintly, his vivid eyes half appealing, half dominant; it was the expression which had brought him bushels of feminine notes when he had starred in "Bachelors' Quarters"; the expression which would make him beloved of women always.

"Kara dear, let us forget it," he pleaded. "We each have something to forgive, and it will make love the sweeter. Give me a chance—let me win you again. Let us assume that we are as free as on the day when we first met each other—do you remember it? By the Hakidoshi lily pond? . . . I am a better sort than I was, dear. I haven't lived badly these five years. Forgive me what I've said and done in anger—all these years I've both loved you and been angry with you. Hasn't it been the same with you? It must have been." There was earnest pleading in every word. "I'll ask nothing, only the privilege of seeing you often, no more than you gave me before we were married. I shall try to persuade you to marry me all over again." He took her hand and kissed it, laid his cheek against it. "Will you, dear?"

"How can I?" she pleaded. "You don't realize. I have lived a whole lifetime in these five years. I'm not the same girl you knew. I had been sheltered and guarded always—now I am an experienced woman. . . . When I left you, I went to Honolulu. When I didn't hear from you, I went to Russia, to the Karesias. We starved, Rand—not a cent of my income reached me. Oh, I learned all about life! . . . I am not the girl you knew—you would only be disappointed."

"And you emerged Sonya Karesia, a talented woman. I love success, Kara—what you have made of yourself makes me want you the more."

"But I think and feel so differently."

"You just told me that you had been sorry—many times," he objected.

"I have been sorry—that I never really loved you. If I had, I could never have left you . . . I have wanted love and a husband and children and a home—I have been lonely enough to die, often and often. But I had rather go on to the end of my days, as I am, than to make another mistake, disappoint you, hurt you more than I have."

Rossiter kept her hand in his clasp. "And you came to it by degrees, didn't you, the intention to free yourself if you could and look for all those things that lie right here, now, in your little hand?" He smiled at her, a fugitive sort of smile.

"Yes," she confessed.

"Well, I've told you to consider yourself free and myself as a suitor. Nobody knows; there will be no embarrassment to you. You can hardly refuse me that, Kara?"

Karesia realized how well he knew her; how utterly impossible it would be for her to refuse. He knew what had kept her as she was all these years, the feeling of a duty thrown aside in an hour of anger and disgust, deep in her the feeling that she had no right to seek freedom.

"If you wish it," she said. "But I can promise nothing."

He caught her to him and kissed her. "There is nothing on earth I wish more! I am not asking you to promise anything—I'm going to make you love me. . . . I want you to see my house, your house—and meet my friends. They'll be interested to meet Sonya Karesia—they like people who do things well. And I am as proud as a king of you." He started for the door, turned and looked at her. "There will be no violence, I promise you, Kara. John Dascome thinks twice before he shoots—before he does anything. You'll know all about it in time."

AFTER the door had closed on Rossiter, Karesia breathed herself back to calmness; to utter weariness and depression, rather. She had done the best she could, and as honestly and as wisely as she could; why think of it? There was the girl upstairs to be considered.

Karesia smoothed her hair and went up to her. Mary Bliss was kneeling beside the bed, changing the damp cloths on Clarice's forehead. She lifted her filmed gaze to Karesia.

"She's so pretty," she mumbled softly. "She's getting better."

For the first time, Karesia saw what might be taken for a smile on Mary Bliss's twisted face.

Even in her flushed stupor, a limp thing in their hands when she and Mary Bliss had undressed her, Karesia had been struck by the girl's beauty. Clarice was less flushed now and her slightly parted lips were lovely in line and color. Rich auburn hair, wavy and bobbed, formed a halo about a face whose features were as clear-cut as those of a cameo, exquisitely chiseled features, a face classic in outline, wonderfully beautiful. Her brows and lashes were much darker than her hair and the lashes extremely thick and long. She was a slim young thing, very young, not more than seventeen or eighteen, Karesia judged, and as lovely of body as she was of feature, as exquisitely fair as an opening rose. Had her mother been as beautiful, Karesia wondered. . . . And her child *drunk!* Like any bedraggled woman of the street! The pity of it!

"She is suffering from the sins of her parents," Dascome had said, and as, for the first time, Karesia thought definitely of

Dascome's wife, another heart ache was added to her collection.

Karesia asked Mary Bliss: "Are you tired? Shall I do that now?"

The woman clung closer to the bed. "I want to stay here," she begged. "She's getting better."

Karesia brought her a footstool to sit on. Then she moved about lightly, made a place in her closet for Clarice's clothes and selected a negligee for her use. On a chair lay the diamond-studded locket with a slender chain attached which they had removed when they had undressed her; the girl had the locket next her bosom, it had not been worn for ornament. Karesia took it to her dressing-table. Then a suddenly formulated desire, a swift longing to know what Dascome's wife had been like, urged her to open the locket.

It was not a woman's face she saw framed in the gold; it was Rossiter's face, faintly smiling, expressive eyes appealing yet dominant, the look that had brought her to him when she was somewhat older than Clarice, but less experienced. As Rossiter had looked at her only a few moments before.

Karesia stood for some time, thinking strange thoughts. Then she closed the locket and went to the bed. She held it up for Mary Bliss to see. "We forgot," she whispered. "We must put it around her neck again." And she lifted Clarice's head and returned the girl's treasure to its place.

Then Karesia went into the glazed room and took down from above her desk a small framed photograph of Randsome Rossiter, younger than in the miniature on Clarice's bosom, but with the same dominant smile. Karesia hid it away in her desk drawer.

This done, she crossed the room and lay down on the couch. Without, it was darker than it had been earlier in the night. Between her and the cañon was a black gulf, but on the crown of the rounded hill beyond was a group of lights, Rossiter's house lighted. . . . Karesia lay there with her thoughts, she did not know how long, but until she heard a car coming up the slope; she was not mistaken, the car was climbing her street. . . . She went in and looked at Clarice. The girl had turned on her side; she was not flushed now, she had slipped into a natural sleep. Mary Bliss sat on the footstool, stroking with her gnarled fingers the hand which Clarice had flung out on the coverlet. Karesia stole away and opened her front door as Dascome ran up the steps.

She smiled her welcome. "I heard you coming—I hoped you would come."

He brought in with him the chill of the night air and the tenseness of the hours that had passed since he last saw her. He was haggard—gray beneath his tan. "I was in town, Mrs. Kaime, trying to find her. I heard that Mr. Rossiter had taken her away from that crowd. Then I went to him and he told me he had brought her to you. How is she?"

"She is asleep—Mary Bliss is with her. Don't be worried; she is sleeping as naturally as a child. Rand said she would sleep it off." When his face lost its tenseness, Karesia felt a tremendous relief: the man was too sensible and discerning to think evil of Rossiter, or do any such wild thing as she had feared; they had not quarreled.

"He could not have brought her to a safer place, but it made me—I cannot tell you how sorry I am that the thing should have been thrust on you."

"I am glad Rand brought her here. What made me most anxious was the way you drove on those streets. I thought that very likely you were in some hospital."

"IT IS kind of you to give me a thought after subjecting you to this annoyance." He looked down. "It is not a habit with her—only an outburst of recklessness over—because something she desired seemed unobtainable."

Karesia guessed what he meant by "unobtainable." No one knew better than she how almost any girl would love Rossiter to desperation. "Will you come now and see her?" she asked.

"If I may."

They went up lightly, so when Karesia stood aside at the door and Dascome walked into the room, Mary Bliss had no warning. When she scrambled frantically to her feet, Dascome in his long ulster loomed tall and large directly before her. Mary Bliss ran like a hunted thing, to the very end of the room, ran against the wall which stopped her, turned and stood, her body jerking, her twisted mouth half open, uttering the queer twittering sounds which had so terrified Karesia that afternoon.

Dascome reached her before Karesia did. He took her by the shoulders and held her against the wall. "Stop it!" he commanded, low but with tremendous force.

The woman gave a wild gasp and stared at him like a trapped animal; then her lips fell apart again and her face began to twitch, and she emitted a single twittering note, which he met with a command which had the force of a blow:

"Keep quiet, do you hear! Not another sound!"

He was obeyed. Mary Bliss stood under his hands, trembling and shrinking and staring in terror, but not jerking and twisting in convulsions. Then Dascome released her. "Go to your room now and go to bed," was his next command. "Give way like that again and I'll turn you over to the doctors. Are you going to do what I tell you?"

"Yes—yes, I will!" she mumbled.

Dascome moved aside and Mary Bliss crept away. He turned then to Karesia, who had been too surprised and shocked for speech or movement.

"Don't be frightened, Mrs. Kaime," he said quietly. "I saved her from another fit, that was all. She's all right now. . . . Just a moment—then I'll explain."

He went over to the bed and looked at his daughter. Clarice had not waked, she had not even stirred. Dascome bent and listened to her breathing, then put his fingers on her pulse. For some moments there was perfect silence. What he had done to Mary Bliss was no longer a terrifying mystery to Karesia; he had frightened the woman out of having an attack. Nevertheless, she felt as if some tremendous force had entered the room embodied in the figure bent over the bed; as if she herself dared not stir without permission. He had acted so quickly and ruthlessly, she herself felt oddly submissive.

Dascome rose finally, looked over at her and smiled. He indicated the glazed room by a gesture. "Can we go in there, so we can talk?"

His smile inspired confidence and Karesia returned more nearly to normal. "I think I ought to speak to Mary Bliss first?" she questioned.

Dascome was still smiling encouragingly. "Surely. You will find her in bed—the sensible place for her."

He was right. Mary Bliss had evidently undressed in haste; her clothes lay in a circle on the floor. She lay covered to the chin and her eyes closed.

Karesia bent over her. "Are you all right, Mary?"

Mary Bliss opened her eyes swiftly. "I thought it was he coming to see!" she said in a terrified whisper.

"No, no," Karesia soothed. "All he wanted was to keep you from being ill as you were this afternoon. Don't you remember how you frightened me? He is the father of that pretty girl you like, and my friend. You must not be afraid of him."

The woman reached and caught her hand. "You won't let him come in here? You won't?" she begged pitifully.

With a resolute effort, Karesia borrowed some of Dascome's firmness. "Not if you will go to sleep. Try to go to sleep now and I promise no one shall come near you. Then in the morning you can talk to the pretty girl."

"I will," Mary Bliss promised humbly. Her twisted mouth quivered. "You're so good to me—to that girl too, but I'm afraid he'll hurt you. I'm afraid——"

"DON'T be afraid, dear," Karesia repeated. "Now go to sleep."

She stayed a few minutes, smoothed Mary Bliss's hair and held her hand, as one would with a frightened child, and, when the woman said that she wasn't frightened any more, she left her. Dascome was standing in the glazed room, looking at the lights on Rossiter Hill.

But he smiled at Karesia when she came in. "She has not had another attack?"

"No, just frightened—she is always frightened."

"I can stay only a few minutes, but please be comfortable while I am here. Lie back on the couch and put your feet up—you look ill."

He piled the cushions behind her, then took the Russian shawl of many colors from the foot of the couch and laid it over her, his hand touching her cheek as he folded it back from her face. Then he closed the doors into the next room and they were in partial gloom.

He stood looking down at her. "You thought I was brutal to that woman. I am sorry," he said abruptly.

"I didn't understand at first—I do now," Karesia protested. "You meant that she should not have one of those attacks, and you had to act quickly."

"And apparently brutally," he appended. "There is certainly something seriously wrong with that woman. I think that probably she has been ill-treated, as you said this evening, and her brain dulled, but I believe her main trouble is hysteria. The sort of fit into which she was throwing herself is dangerous, and I know that a shock will sometimes divert a hysterical patient and prevent convulsions. That is why I did as I did. I don't want *you* to be afraid of me." Dascome's deep voice had deepened into appeal; as if most people feared him and it hurt.

"Sit down here by me, please," Karesia said impulsively. When he was close to her she said softly: "You must not think that, ever. When I see anything done forcefully, I am a little frightened. I get very angry sometimes, but I am a timid woman, really." She felt an uncontrollable desire to comfort him; there was something desolate about the man. "Do you know what I thought that first evening, almost as soon as I saw you?"

"I cannot guess. You'll have to tell me," he said as softly as she.

"That I had never met a man who gave me so instantly a feeling of liking and trust, of confidence and security."

Dascome was absolutely silent. Karesia felt rather than saw that he was swept by emotion; that he was scarlet and tongue-tied. She was startled; never in her life had she said anything with a more honest intent. She flushed in confusion. "So you see I was not afraid to entrust even my precious paintings to you," she added with a poor attempt at lightness.

He seemed to have found his voice at last, and it was toneless. "I shall try to deserve your trust."

The unemotional words relieved her embarrassment. She had stirred him deeply, without meaning to do it; the man had tremendous self-control. He went on. "There is something I have wanted to say: you have already suffered a great deal of annoyance because of me and my family. If ever my being in your house should make it embarrassing for you, I want you to tell me, and I shall go instantly and without any financial loss to you. . . . I haven't words to thank you for your kindness to that poor child in there—and to me. I have traveled this world over pretty well—I have never met a woman who is more genuinely a woman than you are. You deserve happiness."

Karesia was thankful for the dimness, for the tears stood in her eyes. He knew; he was thinking of Rossiter when he said that. "Thank you," she said. "You are sitting in your home now. It is *my* house and I want you here." She hesitated, then: "Mr. Dascome, I want to ask you something, and I know you will not misunderstand me—is your daughter in love with Randsome Rossiter?"

"Yes. . . . Completely so."

"And—he?"

"I think not. Not now. . . . He met her in New York and she did not give him her right name. She knew who he was; she had seen him on the stage when she was a child—Clarice has the theater in the very marrow of her bones. She intrigued him. She met him several times, but she would not tell him who she was. He thought her a French girl—she speaks French perfectly. There is no doubt that he was interested in her, fascinated for the time being and devotedly attentive. He told her about Hollywood and the studios here and about his home here. Clarice understood that he was unmarried. Then, suddenly, he failed to keep an appointment and Clarice learned that he had left for Hollywood.

"Clarice was with the woman who had been her teacher and nominal guardian for a number of years. I was in Los Angeles on business. First I received a telegram from Clarice that she was coming out here to me, then in a few days she came. She told me she wanted to go into pictures. The child has it in her, and she would screen wonderfully. I was only too glad that she was interested—she would be a great deal safer here than in New York, and not idle. So we came to the Hollywood Hotel.

"WHAT brought Clarice here was Rossiter, not pictures, Mrs. Kaime. When I knew, I warned her how it would be. He had dropped her in New York, changed his mind. Perhaps it's to his credit that he did—in the circumstances. But he gave her no explanation, and she followed him here, and a man, accustomed as Rossiter is to women's devotion, does not hesitate to show his annoyance. The result is what you see in there, the culmination of a fit of utter recklessness."

Karesia had considered and had decided. She said quietly: "I suppose you have guessed that Rand is my husband? We were married five years ago. We have been separated ever since. I saw him for the first time in five years—last evening."

"Yes, I was certain of it."

"Yet you took my house—knowing about your daughter."

"The only way to conquer life is to face it. Clarice will learn that the average man wants for his wife a woman he can respect. As I said, she is one of those who can be taught only through experience."

Karesia drew a quick breath. "But it hurts so—experience does! . . . I don't know what the future will be—I shall do the best I can with it. . . . I have told you in confidence. I think there is no one but yourself who knows that I am even acquainted with Randsome Rossiter."

"No one shall learn it through me—not even Clarice."

"Least of all your daughter—not for the present!" Karesia said quickly. "What shall I tell her when she asks?"

"Exactly what happened. That Rossiter took her away from that crowd and brought her here. He knew that I had taken your house. If you will telephone me when she wakes, I will come and get her."

"Will it be known at the hotel? That party last night?"

"I am afraid it will."

Karesia's head lifted. "She shall stay here with me, if she wishes. Why should she go back there and be reminded of it?"

Again Dascome was silent. Then he said in the same toneless way as before, "I am very grateful to you." He straightened and drew a quick breath. "She is very difficult—I hope she won't offend you. If only she will stay here! . . . I'd like to make it a little easier for you to-morrow. May I send my Japanese boy, Takimoto, to help you? Keep him until you are settled next door. He is very capable and an excellent cook."

"What a relief!" Karesia said. "That is good of you! Perhaps he can get me a Japanese? That would solve my difficulty. I simply will not let Mary Bliss work as she has to-day."

"I am going now. . . . Your bed is occupied. Where are you going to sleep?" Dascome inquired.

"Here, I suppose. There is the spare room, but I am so tired that it would take a bomb to move me."

Dascome opened the doors, went through the next room into the hall and disappeared. Karesia sat up, wondering. In a few minutes, he came back, bent down and lifted her.

"Consider me the bomb," he said in answer to her gasp.

Karesia did not stir in his arms; she was too much surprised. Even when he placed her on the bed in the spare room and, kneeling, drew off her slippers, she was speechless. He did it in an intent way, with a sort of eagerness to render her a service; at least, so it seemed to Karesia. In his brief visit to the room, he had turned down the covers and had arranged the pillows.

He drew the covers over her and tucked them about her, gravely and competently. Then he stood up and smiled at her. "Now! Are you comfortable?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered in a small voice.

"Sleep till ten, then. and Taki will have breakfast ready for you. I'll give him his orders. I'll see that everything is locked downstairs and I'll take the kitchen door key with me, so just sleep." And he went out as swiftly as he had entered.

Karesia lay motionless until she heard the sound of his car. Then she turned her face to the pillow and began to cry.

"NO! I won't stay here! He had no right to bring me here!"

The clear, defiant voice waked Karesia. For a moment she was dazed; she was not in her own room and there was no one in the room with her. Then she heard Mary Bliss's indistinct mumble, and recollection made clear to Karesia the responsibilities of the day. She must have slept late.

She got out of bed, put on her slippers, and hastily washed the sleep out of her eyes, her ears assailed meanwhile by Clarice's angry demands. "Where is my hat? Father had no business bringing me here! I don't know this woman—I won't stay in her house!"

Then Mary Bliss came limping in,

wringing her hands. "You were asleep! She says she won't stay here She is going away and that man will get her again. He'll hurt her!"

"Hush!" Karesia commanded. "She shall not go a step!" The girl's angry defiance of Dascome had aroused instantly the combative in Karesia.

She went swiftly through the hall and into her own room, an impressive vision, swathed in oriental crêpe, a mass of tumbled hair above her brows lowered into a straight line. "What is the trouble, Miss Dascome?" she demanded curtly. "I am Mrs. Kaime."

Clarice was searching for her hat in the glazed room. She whirled about and Karesia looked into great gray eyes flushed by anger. They were Dascome's eyes and yet they were not; they were rounder, steadfast, but with a different quality. There were spots of hot color in her cheeks. Yet, despite the girl's defiant expression, Karesia felt that she was as beautiful a creature as she had ever seen.

Clarice took swift note of Karesia's exotic appearance and vivid contempt sprang into her eyes. "I am looking for my hat, madame, so I can leave your house. My father objects to my friends—well, I object to his!"

Karesia's eyes narrowed still more. "You had no hat. You were carried in here like a senseless log. If you have lost nothing more than your hat, you are fortunate."

Evidently the girl was not callous, for her throat as well as her face flushed. "It is not your concern!" she retorted passionately. "Father had no business to bring me here!"

Angry though she was, Karesia hesitated; what she was going to say would hurt.

"Your father did not bring you here," she said, in a softer tone. "It was some one else who brought you. He happened to go to the house where you were, and he felt that he could not leave you there in that condition, so he brought you here. Whatever his opinion of you, he did a decent thing. He has known me for a number of years and he knew that you would be safe in my house. It was Randsome Rossiter who carried you in here and asked me to look after you."

Karesia had known that it would hurt; she had not realized that it would hurt so much. The color drained slowly from Clarice's face and her eyes grew as vague and filmed, almost, as Mary Bliss's. She groped for the couch and sat down, stared across the cañon at Rossiter Hill.

Mary Bliss, who had hung in the background, whimpered. She may not have understood just what had been said, but she knew suffering when she saw it. She crept from behind Karesia and stole to Clarice's side, knelt and stroked her hands. "You won't go away?" she pleaded. "Please don't go away."

Karesia continued. "Your father was searching for you last night. He was desperately anxious and frightened. Then Mr. Rossiter told him that he had brought you here. Then Mr. Dascome came to see me. It seemed best for all concerned that you should not go back to the hotel. Mr. Rossiter himself felt that he could not take you there. To-morrow, this will be your home; I am moving my personal belongings into the next house to-day. Mary Bliss will put the spare room in order and, if you will occupy it while I am busied with the moving, I shall be glad. . . . Shall I, or will you, telephone your father to send your things?"

Clarice was looking at Rossiter Hill. "Yes; I don't care," she said in a smothered way. "Tell father whatever you want to. . . . I don't see why he bothered to take me away last night." She was still looking at Rossiter Hill.

Karesia recognized the wistful note, and her anger melted. But she was not in a position to administer comfort—far from it. There was hard fiber in the girl and a reckless spirit; and her attitude to her father was abominable. "I suppose, because Rand, like most men, does not like to see a girl's self-respect go under. There are those whom it amuses, of course, but Rand is not that sort."

THE way in which Clarice turned and looked at her reminded Karesia poignantly of Dascome, a gaze unwaveringly steadfast. "You know him well then?" she asked as quietly as Dascome would have asked the question.

"She has plenty of self-control if she chooses to use it," Karesia reflected.

"Yes, very well," she returned steadily.

"He comes here often to see me and invites me to his house." It was as well for the girl to realize that at once; it would save trouble later on.

Clarice looked down. Mary Bliss was still crouched beside her, stroking her hands. Just how the woman had introduced herself, Karesia did not know, but it was evident that Clarice did not shrink from her.

"You will stay, won't you?" Mary Bliss begged, now that she seemed to have Clarice's attention.

Clarice's even "Yes" sounded like Dascome. She looked then full at Karesia and in her eyes Karesia read hatred. "I am sorry I kept you out of your room last night, Mrs. Kaime. . . . May I go to the spare room now?"

"Mary Bliss will take you there. The room I was in, Mary. . . . I shall have breakfast sent up to you."

Mary Bliss hurried off with her pathetic approach to a smile, and Karesia turned away with all the dignity of aloofness, an expression that became her, eyelids lowered in apparently sleepy indifference and brow thoughtful. She moved about in the next room, apparently unconscious of Clarice's existence, laid out her dress for the day, prepared for her bath. Clarice's eyes followed Karesia's movements, now undulating, now swift; noted Karesia's yard and a half of hair, her supple body, and her lovely skin and splendid throat. When Karesia disappeared in the bathroom, Clarice sat with eyes fixed on the closed door.

Karesia was glad when she was free to look as she felt. A tremendous sympathy for Dascome and pity for Clarice commingled with the restless feeling that the girl would stab her if she could. What Karesia resented was Clarice's attitude to her father. "That's the thing I can't forgive, not what she said to me," was Karesia's conclusion.

It was a relief to go into her sunny kitchen and find an Oriental in white coat and spotless apron arranging three trays, on one of which were scattered tiny pink rosebuds. Takimoto was not a boy; he was certainly over thirty, and Karesia's considerable experience in the Orient told her at once that he was both intelligent and highly capable, and not the offensively Americanized Japanese type.

He bowed to Karesia. "I am send by Mr. Dascome. These flowers he send to you for tray and I bring."

"Dascome san is very kind. I thank him for both his honorable gifts," Karesia answered, in creditable Japanese.

Takimoto's narrow eyes widened. "You speak then Japanese!"

Karesia smiled at him. "I have lived in your country. Once I was honored by a conversation with your noble Emperor."

"So!" It was a note of deep respect. He bowed again. "It is great honor to be here."

Karesia returned to English. "Please, Taki, take two trays to the room at the end of the hall, one for Miss Dascome and the other for Mary Bliss. Pay no attention if Mary Bliss seems afraid of you; she is very timid. My tray you can put in the dining-room. Afterwards I shall tell you all the things that must be done." The little play in Japanese had amused Karesia; besides, she had attached to herself an interest that would be valuable. Takimoto would see that some countryman of his served her well.

Takimoto brought in from the screened porch a long box, evidently flowers of greater proportions than Dascome's dainty gift. "Japanese boy just bring this," he said.

For a moment, Karesia was puzzled; then she knew, and opened the box gravely. They lay on wet moss, three deep-tinted lotus blooms with long stems entwined. She read the card that accompanied them:

> Kara dear,
> In remembrance.

Karesia's expression was peculiar. The lotus-pond in the Hakidoshi gardens—the same earthy-sweet odor! "The flower of forgetfulness sent me in remembrance," she said to herself. "How like him!"

DASCOME'S furniture had been uncrated, boxes and barrels had been opened, ready for Karesia's inspection, and two Japanese provided to assist her. Karesia was bewildered by the array of household goods.

"Maybe best to choose out furniture first," Takimoto suggested. "Maybe for one room, then 'nother room."

Karesia sat down while Takimoto and

his assistant unpacked picture after picture and held them up for her to see. Karesia chose with promptness. She saw with interest a painting of Dascome, with a keener feeling one of his wife, a child-woman in fluffy organdie, dainty and fair, golden-haired and with eyes as blue as forget-me-nots, and cheeks as softly curved and as delicately tinted as rose petals. Clarice inherited her mother's brows and lashes; her mother's fingers had touched her face, eyes, lips, hair and skin, delicate touches given to a contour that was Dascome's. A firmer hand than her mother's had molded Clarice's chin, darkened her eyes and deepened the gold in her hair.

"Mrs. Dascome," Karesia said without the questioning note. She looked up at Dascome's servant; Dascome had said that the man had been with him for ten years. "She was very, very pretty, Takimoto. Mr. Dascome loved her very much?"

His face was inscrutable, but he answered in his own tongue, "Hi." The Japanese "yes" has many shades of meaning; among others: "Whatever my opinion, I agree politely with your honorable statement."

Karesia wondered at the "Hi." She persisted. "She looks so young. Did she die many years ago?"

"*I* think she die—seven years ago."

Karesia was utterly ashamed of her questioning, so much so that she did not notice the emphasis on the personal pronoun. The urge to know was too strong. "He must have loved her very much? He never married again?"

Takimoto looked at her through brightly narrow eyes. Every Japanese is a matchmaker: to every man children should be born. "I think he like to get married 'nother time. He very fine rich man and get lonely."

Karesia felt decidedly uncomfortable. She rose. "Put them back, Taki; then let us look at something else."

"But one more here," he said, and unwrapped a large photograph plainly framed. This was as distinctly a foreign face as the portraits were American: a man's face, and even photography emphasized the contrasts of black and white; thick black hair not clipped in American fashion, and a thick well-trimmed beard and mustache and black brows, a contrast to white skin; a man of perhaps thirty-five.

Karesia uttered a cry, "Alexander Karesia!" She caught it to her. "How did you come here? . . . Taki, who—what was he to them?"

"I not know."

Karesia felt that he was telling the truth. "Ah, he died long ago, but I can remember him yet—when he talked!" She touched the glass-covered face affectionately. "Just as well that you didn't live to see Russia as I saw it! . . . Taki, this I take with me and ask Dascome san." Her face was alight.

Silver, glass, china, linen; boxes of curtains and hangings, bedding. Karesia took all she needed.

It was a toilsome day. Karesia was grimed with six-years-old New York soot; certainly a man, not a woman, had superintended that packing; curtains had been packed unwashed, the original dust was upon everything. Some of the objects Karesia chose were wrapped in newspapers in which the name, "JOHN DASCOME," or "THE DASCOME CASE," glared, but Takimoto had a quick eye; with a twist and a turn the paper disappeared in a receptacle which he dragged about with him.

There was one box which had not been opened. "What is in here?" Karesia asked.

"Much newspapers—only papers of family—no other things," he said hastily.

"Oh! Then we have finished," she said.

BY NINE o'clock that night Dascome's furniture was in place in Karesia's house; a foundation laid for a smoothly running household, for Takimoto had suggested: "If you like, I get my friend with a wife to live with me in cottage? He good cook. He cook for you and I cook for Mr. Dascome and my friend's wife cook for her husband and me."

Karesia gave him a smudge-faced smile. "So every one will be fed! Get your friend and his wife as quickly as you can, Taki."

"I get him to-morrow, I think," Takimoto promised, and departed, smiling under his coating of soot and dust.

Mary Bliss had heard this conversation and wore a look of despair. "You're going to send me away! I can't stay with the pretty girl either—that man came back."

"You poor soul!" Karesia said. "No, I'm getting some one to cook for us, that's all. . . . What have you been doing all day?"

"I saw him coming in his car and I ran in here the back way. I just waited for you to come back. He tried to get in here to me, but I locked all the doors. Then he looked in the windows and I ran upstairs."

"All he wanted was to know that you were safe," Karesia assured her patiently.

THE next morning, Rossiter ran up the steps of Karesia's double house, strode along the gallery and rang the bell. He carried a box of flowers and under his arm was a newspaper. He heard light steps hurrying to the door, promising a welcome, and he smiled his lovable conquering smile. It faded when he saw who stood before him: Clarice, lips parted, eyes wide and flushed.

Randsome Rossiter was not easily embarrassed; he was more surprised than embarrassed. "I—thought you had moved. . . . How are you, Clarice?" He stepped into the house without pausing to consider.

She understood instantly; the flush faded from her eyes. "Mrs. Kaime—has moved," she said somewhat indistinctly.

Rossiter had the feeling of discomfort familiar to every man who has wooed and withdrawn. He was well aware that, but for the two exciting weeks in New York when he had been fascinated, both eager over and mystified by his great discovery, Clarice would not be standing before him now. He had planned to adventure into the future; his intent had been serious and she had taken him seriously. The painful thing was that she knew why he had withdrawn. But John Dascome's daughter! Never! When he made that discovery, it was all off. For Rossiter's disbelief in Dascome was as profound, more so than it was on the evening when he had bowed himself out of Nadine Navarre's boudoir. No wonder the child had declared herself merely "Mademoiselle Clarice," and had aired her perfect French, shown herself as irresistibly sweet as a May morning. John and Elaine Dascome's blood in her veins! She had been afraid to confess it.

Rossiter had fallen back upon man's time-honored excuse. "The whole thing was her fault." There was something he himself had concealed, but he had intended to explain. Besides, he had traveled so far only in his own mind; he had not spoken of marriage to Clarice, but he had come very near it. When he left New York abruptly, avoiding a painful farewell, he was thankful, for her sake—and his own—that he had kissed her only once.

When he had been startled by Clarice's appealing note written on Hollywood Hotel paper, asking him to come and see her and signed bravely, "Clarice Dascome—that's my full name," he had decided to make his call when he knew she was out and never go again. Later, when she telephoned, he had answered in a formally friendly fashion—he was quite accustomed to that sort of thing—but on this occasion he felt abominably uncomfortable. In New York, he had been so sincerely interested and tender. And it wasn't her fault, being born a Dascome. Then, when Clarice had allowed herself to be caught up by the wrong people, he felt justified. What else could be expected of John Dascome's daughter?

Rossiter was both blessing himself for an escape and fretting under secret irritation, when his eyes had lighted again on Karesia. He was thirty-five, he wanted to marry—the right woman. While he was in the war, and afterwards while he was busied over his uncle's estate, it had not mattered. He was going to launch a big project, he had established himself in Hollywood for that purpose; he wanted a wife in his home. And there, before his eyes the elusively beckoning plume in her little hat, was Kara! Who had loved him and married him, then had walked out of his life, discarding him as a fastidious woman would a satin slipper on which she had found a wine stain! Left him and vanished.

It had swept through Rossiter, the poignant sweetness of her which, in spite of everything, had clung to him through five years. He was on fire, too, burning with years of accumulated anger. He had inquired and had learned that Mrs. Karesia Kaime was the Sonya Karesia whose stories of the Orient had won her fame. He was told that she had just come to Hollywood, that she was a widow, that it was her house which faced his across the cañon—and that John Dascome was leaving the Hollywood Hotel to become her tenant.

Mixed motives had taken Rossiter to Karesia; Randsome Rossiter was himself complex. And complex motives had urged him to take Clarice to her. Out of it all had evolved elemental enough passions; love revived, and jealousy. It was anger at his own stupidity in entering John Dascome's house, rather than his unexpected meeting with Clarice, which flushed him now.

"I didn't know it was this house you had rented," he said without his usual ease.

"I didn't rent it. Father rented it." Angry defiance sprang into Clarice's eyes. "I hope he and Mrs. Kaime are pleased over it this morning! I went to another party last night and didn't get back till late. We made a good deal of noise—the neighbors turned on their lights. Mrs. Kaime lost her morning sleep, I think—I'm glad of it!"

Clarice was not complex; she was the more elemental because she had never been governed. She loved, hated, was motivated as simply as a savage; only her intellect was of a higher order. If she loved, she would be devoted; if she hated, she would strike.

THE pity of it struck Rossiter, just as the thought of her helplessness had urged him to break in on Deeme's party and take her away. He had had her in his car, before it occurred to him to take her to Karesia. Then it seemed a great opportunity: Clarice would be safe with her and at the same time he would be administering a sharp rebuke to Karesia; he hoped also, judging by Karesia's one-time treatment of him under similar circumstances, that taking Clarice to her in that condition would disgust her with her tenants; John Dascome had no business to be in her house.

Rossiter judged that Karesia was pretty well disgusted this morning; she was proud of her home and Clarice had further insulted her pride. Rossiter had not told Karesia of Dascome's history; he had never told tales on any man, but she was certain to hear of it soon, from some one or other, and that would be another blow; it would cure her of Dascome. The revelation would have far more weight if it did not come from him. Karesia had an incorrigible sympathy for the under dog, but not for the kind that would deliberately deceive, come into her house under false pretenses. And in addition there was Dascome's long intimacy with Nadine Navarre. She was coming to Hollywood—another revelation in store for Karesia.

"You look decidedly the worse for wear, Clarice," he remarked gravely. "You like whisky pretty well, don't you?"

"I don't! I hate it!" she flashed. "It's a good way of forgetting things—getting even with some people, too!"

Rossiter studied her. To show sympathy was dangerous. With John Dascome's daughter, a flaying might be more effective than sympathy. "That's what most drunkards and dopes say," he returned coolly. "They haven't an atom of will. . . . That's what I decided in New York, that you'd take the wrong turning the first chance you got and that you wouldn't have will enough to pull out of it."

Clarice's whole body quivered; she flung up her hands, her beautiful face twisted in torment. "It isn't true!" she cried, the tears beginning to roll down her cheeks. "It was because you found out who I was! What difference does it make what I do, or what becomes of me!" The changes in her expression were marvelously sudden and accentuated; her eyes grew granite-hard. "Before I'm through, I'll make some people sorry they ever saw me!"

"God!" Rossiter said to himself, the professional in him alive. "If a director saw her now, he'd go off his head! She can do anything with the muscles of her face—her body, too! I knew it! She has the gift—wonderfully." But he said, with perfect calm: "You've let your father's history prey on your mind and distort everything. There are few places on this earth where it matters so little what one's father was as here in Hollywood. What you make of yourself is what counts here. But it isn't in you to hold to a purpose in spite of everything and work."

Clarice was on fire again. "It is! I could! That's what I meant to do when I came here!" Her eyes filled again. "But you were hateful to me!" She came closer, lifted her face to his, eyes and voice infinitely appealing. "Why, if it doesn't matter—about father, did you change like that? Please tell me! . . . Please?"

He looked away. "I've just told you—I have no confidence in you."

Suddenly her arms were about his neck, her lips on his. "I'll do anything, *anything!* I'll work day and night. I *can.* I *will*—if only you'll love me—as you did!" She kissed his cheek, held his face to hers. "You did love once—I know it. You *wanted* to marry me. You say it doesn't matter—who I am—and I'll never do anything you don't like. I won't hate anybody—I'll do right—if only you'll love me!"

It was complete abandon. Rossiter was burning. It was not in him to resist the physical appeal, not when made by Clarice. He held her close and kissed her. Kissed her again, half in desperation: the girl did not realize! It was the real thing she was pleading for, and he couldn't give it! She was so young—and so *honest*. . . . He thought of Karesia. "*Clarice!* Good Lord!" He held her off. "You don't know what you're doing!"

She stood quivering and gasping. "You love—Mrs. Kaime——"

"Yes. I do."

"You're going to—marry her?"

"I am. . . . If she'll have me."

She jerked away and flung herself face down on the couch, beat the pillows with her clenched fists. "I wish I were dead! I wish I were dead! . . . I can't *bear* it—I hate her!"

"You'll waste your time," he said. "She is big—famous. When life didn't turn out as she expected it to, she got out and made something of herself, and without any millions to help her, either. I doubt if you could do it—I like the woman who can." He turned, took his flowers and went out.

"The Double House" will come to an absorbing conclusion in the next instalment, in March EVERYBODY'S—on sale February 15.

The Beloved Unseen

By Mary Stewart Cutting

DEAR secret friend, who stays with me
To minister invisibly,
You laugh or sorrow with such zest
You lend my life fresh interest.

It matters not that I have passed
Into the Quiet Years at last,
For when you take my hand I find
New pathways ever for the mind.

My days are full of stirring things
Wrought by your far imaginings.
With you I heed nor time nor space—
I hit the ball, I run the race.

I speed the motor flaring by,
I guide the plane that trails the sky,
Or sail for billowing miles on miles
To reach the luring South Sea Isles.

I ride, I ride with shining lance
Across the border of Romance,
And then beneath your magic sway
I sing the song, I act the play!

Your name? 'Tis Youth. Oh, fond and free!
Once you were mine for all to see,
But though 'tis said that you have flown,
Beloved, my heart is still your own!

The Golden Grove

The Pathos of Having to Fight to the Last Ditch for Something That Should Be Yours Anyway!

By Talbert Josselyn

CALE LARKIN stared into the bottom of his small, tilted prospecting pan, eyes wide, breath in-drawn, teeth set hard against his lower lip. Running slowly about the bottom edge of the pan, following a driblet of water and pulverized rock, there slid a string of gleaming yellow particles. Gold!

He had struck it.

His head snapped up; he thrust himself to his feet. His eyes left the pan; no longer wide, but now narrowed, they swept the world of rock and brush and sandy earth. A moment before he had been alone—alone with himself and burros and hopes that were being forever put off; now, with that string of minute golden flakes shining wet in the bottom of the pan, he was host to a wild army of thoughts, to a thousand imagined, peering faces.

His fierce gaze took in the nearer ledges and clumps of low brush, extended itself to the bold, red and ocher hills above and the tree-yucca studded flat below. Again and again his eyes swiveled and sought. Relaxingly he exhaled. There was no one to be seen.

Alone. Before his find he stood alone, a lean, tanned, wind-creased man of medium height and passing the rim of middle age, in sweat-stained hat, worn coat and faded overalls. It was the year after the discovery of Goldfield, and was the last week of that year. Too late at Goldfield, Cale had learned one thing there: that rhyolite, a rock hitherto supposed to be barren of precious metal, might carry it in unbelievable quantity. Southward he had searched, and now . . . For the first time in years the vision of the orange grove came to him; the grove that he had promised himself would one day be his, when he struck it. Not too large a grove, but one big enough to keep him busy, with water, and fruit, and the sound of bees. Clear the picture rose before him in this land of rock and brush and sand.

"The Orange Grove Mine," said Cale Larkin. "That's what it will be."

He strode toward the pack boxes, where lay his location notices, his eyes still visioning the dream beyond ledge and tree-yucca. He started to bend down, and stopped as though he had become rock itself. At one side of a cholla clump, hidden until now, there stood, not a man, but something having far greater threat than the presence of any person. A mining location monument!

How long his eyes were on it he never knew, nor was he conscious of having run toward it; not until his fingers stung from tearing at the rocks at its base did he come wholly to himself, did he begin to think. There might be no location notice in it after all. The claim might be an old, old one. Furiously he sought, hoping that his fingers would find nothing—and came upon a rusted tin can turned bottom up. With a gasp the finder bent back the ragged cover and clutched at the folded paper within. Again hope fought its way up. If the date were two years and more back . . . His eyes whipped to the bottom of the sheet. It was dated January first of the preceding year.

The ledge was some one else's. It would continue to be until midnight of December thirty-first, four days hence.

The muscles on Cale Larkin's jaw stood out. Again he smoothed the paper. "This claim shall be known as the Ocher Hill mining location claim. Roy Witherspoon, locator. Al Mason, witness."

THE Ocher Hill Mine instead of the Orange Grove! But if the locators did not return, if they did no assessment work during the next four days, then on the stroke of midnight of the thirty-first the title would lapse, and the claim would be open to location by whosoever might be there. The bleak look went from Cale's eyes. A chance! The Orange Grove Mine still had a chance.

The location monument lay a good fifty yards from the rhyolite ledge. It showed signs of having been built hurriedly, possibly having been put up early on the morning of that January first. Witherspoon and Mason couldn't have prospected the ledge, or they would have found what Cale had found. They had doubtless located on the snap hope that something, some day, might be found; and had never come back. Well, Cale Larkin would. Carefully he replaced the notice in the tin, bent down the cover and put the can in its rock nest at the base of the monument. He backed away, brushing out his tracks, and returned to the rhyolite ledge over trackless, rocky ground. First he emptied his nearly flat muslin tobacco sack into his one remaining coat pocket that was stout and whole, then poured into the sack the remnants of the rock that he had pulverized in the small, iron mortar; he would want to test it again. He drew the string tight, tied it, and put the sack into the pocket along with the tobacco. Safer in his coat than in the pack boxes; the coat was always with him, the boxes might remain in camp, and no one knew what might happen to a man's camp when he was away. With deliberation he took in his surroundings, making a mental map; then replaced pan and mortar in one of the two burros' pack boxes, picked up his prod stick and started the animals over the shoulder of the hill.

Less than two hundred yards down it his face again went taut. He had come full upon a second monument.

Once more he dug at its base, and once more brought to light a location notice. The same date as the other; Ocher Hill Number Two, Witherspoon and Mason.

The lines deepened between Cale Larkin's eyes. Two claims by the same locator—no haphazard, single-claim work, this. A growing surmisal ran over the man with the two burros. Scrutiny of the lower slope picked up one, two—five other monuments. A group of claims. Although nothing had been found, the locating of such a group meant a well-ordered plan somewhere, and if the men had put in time two years ago to locate such a group, they might take steps to continue their ownership.

The lean surveyor of the hillside thrust the butt of his goad stick into the ground. Above all else must he now learn who and what these claim locators Witherspoon and Mason were.

THE sun was sinking behind the hills as the rider of a burro, with mount brought to a leisurely shuffle, drew up before a one-story board structure bearing the sign "General Merchandise," alighted, and went inside. Two men were in the store; the owner, leaning over a counter, was short and heavy-set, with long arms, and wandering bovine eyes not too evenly placed in a head that tilted a little to one side; the other, a nondescript figure in overalls and heavy coat, seated on the counter beside him, drawing at a ragged brown-paper cigarette.

"Howdy," greeted Cale.

"How're you?" returned the pair.

In roundabout manner Cale approached his objective by studying a scanty stock of goods. "I'd like to get some sugar and coffee, a couple cans of milk, and some tobacco." The purchases made and stowed in a small canvas sack hung over his shoulder, he hitched himself up on the counter opposite the others, and took out a knife and pipe, put elbows on knees and nodded toward the door. "Wind blows across the flat pretty nippy. Going to be cold before the year quits."

"You said a mouthful," agreed the store owner, bovine eyes on Cale.

"But I'm fixed for it," continued Cale. "Got lots of blankets and a snug little tent."

"You out in the hills?"

"Yep, over that way." Cale waved an indefinite hand in the direction whence he had come.

Silence fell. After a span Cale went on.

"I saw some location monuments out in that direction to-day that I'll bet gave somebody a lot of cold hands before they were finished. Located in January some time ago, Witherwood and——"

"You mean Witherspoon and Mason?" questioned the nondescript man, taking his cigarette from his mouth. "That happens to be us."

Fortunately for himself, the start that Cale gave was in conjunction with the scraping at the rim of his pipe. He made pretense of examining a jabbed thumb; then, seeing that the storekeeper was looking his way, broke out with:

"Looks like you took up the whole blamed country."

The storekeeper nodded. "Yeah, me and Al got sort of a New Year's present for that. City crowd wanted to have something to sell stock on, so we located it for them at so much a location."

"Pretty easy," said the nondescript Al. "We ought to be getting a letter any time now saying whether they want us to relocate 'em again."

Cale again gripped the bowl of his pipe. "How come relocation? I thought that there had to be a lapse of time with the ground vacant before the same parties could relocate."

"Oh, that's easy," grinned the storekeeper. "Two years ago I did the locating, and Al, here, was witness. Now this New Year's it will be just turned around: Al Mason, locator, and Roy Witherspoon, witness. I guess that gets around the legal stuff pretty."

"Pretty is right," glowed the nondescript Mr. Mason.

Storekeeper Witherspoon glanced out of a grimy window. "And if it looks as though it's going to blow up a storm, I'm for going out the afternoon of the thirty-first and getting the thing done, instead of having any more of this early-morning New Year's stuff."

He nodded brightly up at Al Mason, then sent his look across to the other counter. It was a look that merely sought approval, but it quickened into active interest as it took in Cale Larkin's changing face.

Cale, glancing up, met storekeeper Witherspoon's eyes. In a manner that he tried to make casual, Cale reached for his tobacco. As hand went into coat pocket, his fingers came into contact with the rounded muslin sack that no longer carried tobacco; he fought down a tingling thrill, made a grab at the loose tobacco, and brought out a large, five-fingered pinch. It was too large, and he shook some of it on the counter, then kneaded the rest in the palm of his hand and filled the pipe. In pressing down the pipe load his busy gaze passed over the palm, and came back to stay there. Not all of the grains remaining in the palm were tobacco. Some were of crushed rock.

Sweat came out on Cale's forehead. The thin muslin sack had leaked.

With a sweep he wiped palm over knee. His eyes, roving, caught the cast-off shreds of tobacco on the counter, and something more than tobacco along with them. The pipe-holding hand came down and brushed across the counter, and when it was lifted, the counter was clean. Out of the corners of straining eyes he looked across the store. Nondescript Al was lighting a fresh cigarette, Witherspoon's wandering gaze was elsewhere—whether it had been on him a moment before, Cale could not tell.

Al snapped the match from him and exhaled lengthily, a new thought seeming to arise with the smoke. "I read where a lot of wildcat firms in the city had gone broke. Maybe we won't get no news this year."

"Never can tell," said the storekeeper non-committally.

Cale's pipe was now under full draft. As he swung down from the counter, one of his feet scuffed casually over the board on which the grains of tobacco and crushed rock had fallen. "Guess I better be getting back to camp. Adiós, all." Going through the doorway, he felt that the eyes of storekeeper Witherspoon were on him. His stay had been more than long enough.

"Old-timer," said he to the burro as they left the town behind in the growing dark, "damn that leaking tobacco sack. If that wandering-eyed Witherspoon gets wise to what I brushed onto the floor and sweeps it up and pans it, we're going to have our hands more'n full before we say 'Happy New Year' to any Orange Grove Mine. Boy, we've got to do some thinking and then some."

JUST how full Cale Larkin's hands promised to become was shown early the next afternoon. A mile across country from the rhyolite ledge on the ocher hill, he was making pretense of prospecting along the side of a rocky knoll above his camp and spring; to all who might come journeying and looking, it was paramount that he keep them and their surmisals as far as possible from the gold-bearing ledge which he could not locate for his own until midnight of the thirty-first. His eyes, ever sweeping the knoll, suddenly glimpsed first-hand evidence of these surmisals in the shape of a cautious head poking itself around a nest of rocks. Without a hint that the rough hillside had on the instant become changed, Cale went on with his ostensible prospecting, examining bits of float rock here and there. Imperceptibly his search turned toward a pulpit-like upheaval of stone, and once behind this all leisureliness vanished. He whipped off his hat, crawled lightning-like to an out-looking crevice and peered down.

It was no longer only a head that he saw. A short, thick-set figure with long arms slid into the open, crossed swiftly to where stood a low-branched tree-yucca, and slipped out of sight.

The storekeeper.

"That tobacco sack!" whispered Cale.

For a moment he lay with brain at dead center, then whirled into preconceived plan and action. He worked his way back to his hat, caught up a number of loose pieces of rock, straightened, and came out into the open. Placing the loose pieces of rock one after another on a large stone, he broke them with his prospecting pick and studied the cleaved surfaces with a pocket magnifying glass. He shook his head, cast the fragments aside, and resumed search along the knoll.

All afternoon he prospected thus. Twice during that time he broke from the slope and ran down toward the spring with supposed samples gripped tightly in his hands. Furiously he ground them in the little iron mortar, panned them, scrutinized them, and each time came back up the knoll muttering to himself. To talk aloud to oneself was nothing extraordinary for a man living alone in the hills, nor did it seem out of the way that he chose to do his loudest talking when near a tree-yucca that was thick and low-branched and which might have ears. "Got to get a bigger prospecting pan. Go over to the railroad town tomorrow." And at the end of the afternoon, coming down the slope for the last time after fruitless searching, he whirled when near the yucca, and with a piece of float rock in his hand, shook his fist at the knoll top. "I'll get you yet!" he cried as though the knoll were a person. "Nothing but float so far, but you've got the ledge somewhere and I am going to find it."

At camp he cooked supper and ate, outwardly intent on his task, but as soon as the meal was done he withdrew into the bell-shaped tent, lit a candle, took out writing materials from one of the pack boxes, and with these boxes grouped about him to cut off telltale shadows that might be thrown on the tent wall, he wrote a letter.

To all intents and purposes the trip of the morrow to the railroad was for a larger gold pan, but the real objective was the mailing of this letter, addressed to an old-time friend and partner living in the county seat; a letter with rough map and description calling for his arrival at the earliest moment, to help hold down the Orange Grove Mine.

SUNSET was once more stalking across the hills as he pulled into camp, lighter by one letter and heavier by one prospecting pan than in the morning. With great flourish and show for all who might be lingering in that vicinity to see, but without making close inspection of his camp belongings, he took the pan from his canvas sack and carried it to the spring, then hurried up the slope and resumed prospecting, pick in hand, where he had left off the afternoon before. Again he began his suppositious search, but eyes that pretended to be looking for pay rock went up and down, back and across for evidence of whether the decoy statements had succeeded; and just as the light was beginning to fade he came upon the object of his hunt. Almost hidden in a clump of overtopping brush, and built of scarcely more than half a dozen rocks, there stood a location monument; a monument where none had been the day before.

The mutterings and pantomimings of the previous day had borne their fruit. Storekeeper Witherspoon had taken rich advantage of Cale Larkin's absence and had located the knoll—the knoll which seemed to hold so much of promise, and which stood a good mile away from the rhyolite ledge on the shoulder of the ocher hill.

Cale's eyes gleamed. Here on the knoll had he succeeded in concentrating the storekeeper's thought and action. Now, for the next four and twenty hours, and more, must he hold them there.

For a quarter of an hour longer he continued to potter about the knoll, then descended to the spring with the air of a man baffled in search yet dogged. As he filled his canteen he studied the ground about the spring, and though the light was nearly gone his eye picked up boot signs other than his own; two other pair. Roy Witherspoon had had nondescript Al Mason for company.

Two against one. Slowly Cale made his way to camp, and here, though to ordinary appearances things looked the same as he had left them, close scrutiny told him that there had been visitors—one of the pack boxes was slewed around a little too much, the position of the blanket roll was not exactly that of the morning. They had combed the place; the search for gold-bearing rock had been thorough, both on the knoll and in camp. And they were two against one.

Cale sat down, and his shoulders slumped in thought. He must hold them to the barren knoll until the following midnight; must hold them both. One of them he could handle, but two? They would split forces; would watch him from two angles. Yet in some manner he must hold them both.

His shoulders slumped lower; the evening passed; night stars wheeled up the sky. Then, with quick-drawn breath and slow exhalation, he had it. Silently he rummaged in pack boxes and drew out a jumper and overalls, and collected all his odd pieces of rope and wire and twine; with them he edged out of the tent and into the night. An hour later he slipped back in again, but he no longer had jumper and overalls, nor the rope and wire and twine.

And now the dawn of the last day of the year came climbing out of the night, cold, and with gusty wind sweeping down from the north. With breakfast finished long before the reds and crimsons had begun to kindle in the blue sky-wall of the east, the next care of a prepossessed Cale Larkin was for his burros. These he rounded up, and riding one and leading the other, he made his way to a flat a quarter-mile or so from camp where sere bunch grass grew heavy. Here he tethered one of the animals, then rode the other back to camp, where he paused only long enough to gather up prospecting pick and pan, and rode away again, now making straight for the knoll of his supposed desire. To all who might be abroad and observant that morning, it was plain that Cale Larkin was through with walking to and from camp.

On arrival at the knoll he picketed his mount. Once more he began the simulation of searching for gold-bearing rock. That the locators of the knoll would not close in on him until he made show of having found it in permanent ledge formation, he felt sure. Their hiding of the location monument showed that. That was their sort—to let some one else find for a certainty, then to rush in and claim for their own. Grimly he proceeded with the work of delay, of staving off until darkness.

EARLY morning became mid-morning; the hours pulled themselves along. Steadily Cale Larkin searched, working backward and forward and slowly upward across the rugged ground, continually breaking open rock with the head of his prospecting pick, examining it with his magnifying glass, throwing it down, breaking open more. Every now and then he did not throw the pieces down, but, after studying them longer than usual, carried them to the spring, and here pulverized them, and panned them in the large new pan brought from the railroad town. Eagerly each time he would scrutinize the bottom of the pan, now shaking his head at the end of the scrutiny and washing the pan clean with fresh water, now—and this was rare—nodding quickly and with satisfaction, and hastening back up the slope for continuing search where the likely rock had been found.

Noon drew into afternoon. The gusty wind of the morning now drove steadily, with gray clouds riding low on its back. The clouds closed up their ranks; the sun went out; a chill and leaden world swung toward late afternoon—numbing to all who might be crouched stiff and hidden and muttering; and the searcher grinned a wisp of a smile.

Vigorously he broke off a piece of rock

up-thrusting from a ledge toward which he had been making more and more narrowed approach and pannings—growingly successful pannings—for the last half-hour. A swift scrutiny of the rock, and he was running for the spring; furiously he mortared, dumped the white dust into the pan, slopped in water, shook the pan, tilted it, and peered. Then he was on his feet executing a wild dance, and then thudding up the slope. He had found his ledge.

But as he came up to it his hands, which in the course of flight had searched through his pockets, fell limply by his sides, then recommenced the wild searching. To all the world, at the moment of discovering the ledge he had lost his location paper. He dashed down his hat, caught it up again, and sped for the burro that had browsed tethered and uneasy on the slope since morning. He unloosed him, swung on his back and was away for camp as fast as hands and heels could make the burro carry him. He flung himself off—took time to slip the tether rope about a tree-yucca trunk—dived into the tent and came out with location notice and pencil. Dropping on a knee, he started to write; but daylight had gone. He broke twigs and branches; kindled a fire. Stooping, he again wrote, and left off writing to put frying-pan and coffee-pot on the fire, to warm up bacon and beans and coffee, and to write again, eating at the same time. Now that he had found it, in this far-away tenantless corner of a land of rock and wind and on-plunging night, what would a few minutes more or less matter? Thus he seemingly questioned, eating as he wrote, and darkness drew tighter the circle about him, and the pencil went on describing the claim to the bottom of the page, to the naming of the location—and the name that he gave tallied with the description that he had just given of a claim a mile away, of a rhyolite ledge on the shoulder of an ocher hill. It was that of the Orange Grove Mine.

He rose and trod out the coals of his fire; slid into the tent and caught up his carbine. He untied the burro, swung aboard it, and pushed out into the wall of night.

THE last episode of Cale Larkin against Witherspoon and Mason was at hand. Two against one. One of them, probably Witherspoon, would be guarding the apparent find on the knoll; the other, by all chances, was close up to camp, watching every move that Cale made, and was ready to slip in behind and dog his steps. Of this watcher, the shadowy figure on the burro now had to make sure. He rode straight ahead for a minute or so almost at a jog trot, then yanked his mount behind a tree and held him there, motionless. With head turned, eyes peering from out of their corners, and ears laid back, he waited; and finally out of the black world there moved something that was not animated by the driving wind.

He was being followed.

With the muttered exclamations of a man whose mount has balked, he prodded the burro on. A minute passed; several minutes, with the course altering away to one side ever so slightly, then more and more, until a sandy hillock loomed darkly ahead, and here Cale Larkin leaned forward and dug his heels into the burro's flanks and beat with the carbine butt, until the animal burst into a frantic run that carried it up the hillock and over and down its far side into a bowl-like hollow thick with tree-yucca. Off sprang rider when in the thickest of the clump, and holding the burro with one hand bent low and caught up something from the base of the largest tree with the other; something that had the semblance of a man—a brush-made man stuffed into jumper and overalls and held in shape with rope and wire and twine. Upon the burro's back he swung the figure, and roped it into place with fingers working at their swiftest. Then animal and new rider were gone, the burro, freed of guiding hand and aided by a farewell boot-toe, snorting straight across country for a flat where bunch grass grew heavy, and where its companion burro had been braying for company since dawn.

Behind yucca trunk crouched the late rider. Down the hillock side came some one running—a man. Close by the trunk he passed in pursuit, and the words of his choosing as he passed were not those usually associated with the approach of a new year and its good will. Fairly burning the sand under his feet, the burro-trailing Al Mason went by and was gone.

So was Cale Larkin, in the opposite direction. Head down, carbine in the crook of an arm, he scuttled out of the bowl-like hollow. First at a walk, then at a trot, then at top speed, he made across country for the shoulder of the ocher hill—for the gold-bearing rhyolite ledge. Wind buffeted him, rocks tripped him, brush tore his clothing. Something touched his cheek; something cold and wet. It touched his cheek again; it brushed upon his knuckles. Snow—it had begun to snow. He hunched his head lower.

Now he was at the foot of the shoulder, and now he was climbing it. Panting, he forced himself on. Somewhere but a short distance ahead lay the rhyolite ledge. Behind, in the swirling blackness, Roy Witherspoon crouched guarding a barren knoll, and Al Mason kept watch upon two burros. On the morrow would arrive for Cale Larkin the reënforcing old-time friend and partner. The wind swooped in violent outburst, the snow drove harder; but though there was howl and drift, though the dying year raced by in its chill chariot, there came to Cale Larkin the vision of an orange grove; of oranges and running water; of fruits and blossoms and bees.

In March Everybody's

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March *EVERYBODY'S*—Out February 15

A Novelette Complete in This Issue

First Degree

Duty Spurred Barbara to a Life of Devotion to a Helpless Cripple; but Was Her Labor of Love Worth the Terrible Cost?

By Gerald Mygatt

Illustration by Courtney Allen

AS THE orange-bodied taxicab rounded the corner from Fifth Avenue and lurched into the side street, the elderly, gray-bearded gentleman leaned abruptly forward and tapped sharply on the glass which separated him from the driver.

"Right here!" he called out impatiently, yanking open the door. Even before the cab had jolted to a halt he was out upon the pavement, a crumpled bill ready. "Keep the change," he directed curtly, and wheeled away.

As he hurried across the sidewalk he twitched his watch from his pocket, glanced at it, shook his head dubiously. A stranger, seeing him, might well have paused to wonder, for there is always something patently incongruous about headlong haste in an elderly gentleman, fine-featured, portly, impeccably groomed, with the voice of one accustomed to deference. Now he was striding up the steps of the austere white marble building which housed, so it was said, more brains and more personal distinction per capita than any other club in all New York.

At the top of the steps a liveried man-servant politely blocked his path. The gentleman halted.

"Are you a member?" the attendant asked.

The elderly man blinked, seemed to shake himself.

"Member? How's that? Oh, yes—I beg your pardon! Of course not. No, I'm not a member. I—I wish to see Judge Cullingham. I was given to understand he would be here now—Judge Cullingham of the Criminal Courts. I should like to send in my card."

"Have you an appointment, sir?"

"Appointment? No. He doesn't know me. Here!" The bearded man pulled out his wallet, fumbled for a card, handed the bit of white pasteboard to the doorman. "Will you please tell Judge Cullingham that I wish to see him about a matter of extraordinary and imperative importance? Please tell him that—extraordinary and imperative."

The man in livery bowed, his expression changeless.

"If you will take a seat in the strangers' room I will see if his Honor is in." He pulled aside a curtain, revealing a small, square reception room at the right, bowed again and disappeared.

The newcomer chose one of the great leather settees which flanked the walls, settling himself upon it with a long breath that was half sigh and half sheer physical relief. He let his gaze roam about the walls. Then suddenly he sat forward. Upon a desk near his hand stood a small calendar in a leather frame, informing him with well-bred insistence that to-day was Tuesday, October 24. Again the elderly gentleman blinked, bit his lips together, shook his head as a boxer does who takes a blow on the jaw.

"As if I could forget it!" he muttered. "And that to-morrow's the twenty-fifth! Oh, Barbara! Why didn't you tell me before to-day? Even a little time—oh, yes!" He looked up quickly as the liveried attendant appeared in the doorway.

"HIS Honor is in," the man recited, "but he begs to be excused. If you will call on him to-morrow in his chambers——"

"To-morrow morning!" The elderly gentleman was upon his feet. "To-morrow morning will be too late. Tell him that. Did you tell him what I said? Tell him it's a matter of life and death. Did you give him my card?"

"Certainly, sir. But you understand——"

"I understand nothing except that I am in great trouble and that others who are dear to me are in greater trouble, and that Judge Cullingham, because of his experience, because of his knowledge of human nature in time of crisis, may perhaps be able to help. Here!" He brought out his wallet again. "I gave him my personal card before. Here is my business card. Ebenezer T. Prence, head of the Prence Advertising Agency. I am Mr. Prence. Tell Judge Cullingham that it is not in any way a business matter but that this may help to show I am not a crank. Tell him that. Tell him everything I've said. And tell him I must see him, if only for one minute. If he listens that long he will listen to the rest."

"Very good, sir," said the attendant, with the same expressionless face, and backed out through the doorway.

The elderly man's eyes were flashing now as he strode from one side of the room to the other. A judge, indeed! What was a judge for, he asked himself bitterly, but to straighten out humanity's snarls and tangles? And here was a snarl which by to-morrow would be tragedy—one way or the other a tragedy, without question, without possibility of human prevention. One way or the other—and either way a crime. Why hadn't he a right to ask his Honor's time and help? Yes, he had thought of laying the case before a clergyman. Perhaps that would still be possible; but with a clergyman there would be sentiment, other considerations. No, this was a straight case for a judge, and for only such a judge as this man Cullingham, by reputation and by character, had proved himself to be.

"I beg your pardon," said the attendant's voice in his ear.

"Oh, yes!"

"His Honor will see you for five minutes. He is at present in the Turkish bath and will necessarily be some little time, but if you will wait, sir——"

"I'll wait," said the visitor tersely.

Ebenezer Prence sat down slowly after the attendant had withdrawn. Five minutes! He laughed sardonically. Five minutes in which to lay out a situation that had been five months in the actual building. Five minutes—and so much to tell! Well, where would he begin? Where and how? He settled himself more deeply into the leather cushions. Little by little, ever so gradually, his features softened into a smile. . . . Everything had seemed so beautiful, had actually been so beautiful, back there in those warm, drowsy office days of May and June and July. Barbara herself had been so happy then. And square little Johnny DeVane had had the whole world ahead of him. H'm! Barbara! Roderick had always been so proud to credit himself with Barbara—good old colored Roderick. Perhaps, after all, the thing had begun with Roderick. . . .

RODERICK was a game, and Roderick knew it. He enjoyed the game hugely, for the rules were very simple. He sat at a desk in a comfortable chair, and the person who tried to get past him either did or didn't.

Kindly as he was, he took more solid pleasure in keeping people from reaching the private office of Ebenezer Prence than Ebenezer himself took in clinching a contract for a two-hundred-thousand-dollar account. As the outer corridor door would swing open, Roderick's face, in a manner of speaking, would simultaneously swing shut. Then he would level his eyes at the newcomer with a quiet dignity, such a dignity as only a middle-aged negro can command. Thus the game would begin.

If Roderick knew the person he would flash his teeth in a smile, and almost inevitably receive a smile in return; and if Roderick had come to like him they would chat and Roderick would stand up and bustle about and be helpful indeed. But let a stranger enter the office, particularly a breezy stranger, and the reason for seeing Mr. Prence himself or Mr. McAndless, who made up the lists, or young Mr. DeVane, who was in charge of production, must be a better reason than most strangers had.

For fourteen years Roderick had held his post, and as he himself frequently said he had seen all kinds; salesmen breezy and salesmen confidential, salesmen haughty and salesmen stupidly dull; book agents and insurance agents and those whose business was always "strictly personal"; artists and writers and investors and inventors and innumerable cranks. And of job hunters he had seen no end.

There was no reason, therefore, for Roderick to be particularly interested when, at three o'clock of a certain May afternoon—one of those warm May afternoons when an office drones drowsily like a hive of tired bees—the outer door opened and a young woman in blue stepped into the reception room. Roderick had witnessed the stepping of countless young women into this bailiwick of his, and one young woman more or less meant a flat nothing in the dignified course of Roderick's life.

He was slightly puzzled, consequently, when the young woman, instead of advancing to his desk and asking for something or somebody, stopped just within the doorway, and let her eyes rove slowly about the four walls.

Now Ebenezer Prence took great pride in that outer office of his, and well he might. Its butternut paneling, hung with etchings, its shaded lights, its leather chairs, the great refectory table with its magazines and books, even the carved desk at which Roderick presided—these things together had required an expenditure of several thousand dollars and much inherent good taste.

The young woman who had gained Roderick's attention by apparently not wanting anything now let her eyes fall upon the grave and inquiring face of the guardian of this demesne, and suddenly smiled, at the same time briskly nodding her head.

"Oh, I *like* this!" she stated. Then after another glance about her she walked over to Roderick's desk. "Are you—that is, do you belong here—regularly?"

"Yes, madam," said Roderick with dignity.

"Oh, I like that too!" announced the young woman, and nodded her head briskly again.

As Roderick put it ten minutes later in describing the incident to Mr. McAndless, there were only two things he was suddenly sure of at that moment. One was that the newcomer was not a business woman, and the other was that she was just as decidedly a lady. "Seemed very young and inexperienced," Roderick reported in the less precise English which he reserved for those whom he considered intimates. "Seemed like she needed somebody to help her. Don't know why, Mr. Mac. Just sailed by me like I wasn't there at all. And me, I was smilin' and bowin' and before I knew it she was in with the chief."

"DO YOU mean to say a job hunter got by you, Roderick?" asked young DeVane, who had just strolled into McAndless's office. "You're getting old, Roderick. I've often told you that." He pretended to frown.

Roderick grinned sheepishly. "Job hunter or insurance agent," he admitted, "I let her through. And Mr. Prence was busy too and sort of mad, but you know he always——"

"Yes, yes," put in young DeVane, "Mr. Prence always relies on your judgment, Roderick. Seems to me I've heard that somewhere before."

"Well, a fat chance any job hunter has here," observed McAndless, "even a beautiful siren who can bunk her way past Roderick."

"Not so beautiful, Mr. Mac," said Roderick patiently. "Just—somethin'. I don't know. But I don't want the boss to be mad with me. She's in there with him still."

"Your job's as good as gone," said DeVane cheerfully.

Roderick's brown face wrinkled into a deprecatory grin. He liked young Mr. DeVane. Almost everybody did.

"Exactly how did she do it, Roderick?" that young man now asked. "Letter of introduction, or winning ways, or what?" He knew well enough that Roderick would not leave his post to report an ordinary passage at arms.

"Just nothin'," said the negro. "First she looks over the office like she was renting a flat, and she says isn't it nice, and then she comes over to me and says Mr. Prence must be a real gentleman—all like she was talkin' to herself and not to me; and then she draws a deep breath and says please she wants to see him, and I ask her why and she says it's personal, and I say it's impossible, and right away she looks like she's goin' to cry, only she doesn't, and she sort of stamps her foot, only she doesn't. Then she holds up her chin and says she's got to see him, and I say it's impossible again and she says it's not impossible and she knows Mr. Prence will see her because she knows he's a gentleman, and inside of two minutes I'm in the boss's office.

"Well," finished Roderick, "he saw her and she's in there now. And I'd let 'em in till I was fired if they'd smile at me and thank me the way she did when I held the door for her—that's a true fact." Roderick flicked his eyes suddenly toward the reception room, which was visible through the glass door of McAndless's office. "Excuse me," he said. "There's somebody just come in."

But even as Roderick was turning and at the same time composing his features into their habitual courteous blankness the door of Mr. Prence's private office opened and Mr. Prence himself stepped out, ushering by her elbow the young woman in blue of whom Roderick had obviously spoken. It came over Johnny DeVane at this moment, so he later confessed, that Roderick had stated a whole truth. She was not beautiful, but she was young and piquant and sparkling, and—yes, there certainly was a something about her.

"Just a moment, Roderick," said Mr. Prence. Then: "This is Miss Brynn, gentlemen. She will be with us from now on. Miss Brynn, this is Mr. McAndless and this is Mr. DeVane, both of whom I hope you'll come to know better." The two men bowed. "Roderick, I believe, you've already met."

"Oh, yes!" said Miss Brynn. Her eyes were dancing as she took them all in. They were blue eyes, and when they danced they shimmered. "I shall work very hard," she told them, and then, as if not sure that she had said the right thing, sent an appealing look toward Mr. Prence himself.

"I hope so, my dear," said the head of the organization. "We all want to work hard, I think. At the present time, as I told you, things are very light. But any moment, now, the tide is going to turn. And we can at least work for that."

McAndless, who was middle-aged and gray-haired, shot a covert, questioning glance at young DeVane. Well did both of them know, as Mr. Prence himself knew, that the organization was running at a loss, paying reduced salaries and no dividends, and fighting against time for the improvement of business conditions. How, then, could it be that the chief was adding another load to the pay-roll? But Johnny DeVane was not looking at McAndless. Nor was he even conscious that his eyes were otherwise occupied.

"That'll be all just now, Miss Brynn," Mr. Prence was saying. "If you'll be here at nine in the morning we'll start you off. I'm sure we can find a useful place for you."

"But it's I who must make a place for myself," said the girl. "I understand that, and I'm going to try very hard."

"I know you are, Miss Brynn, and I'm sure you'll succeed."

AFTER she had gone the head of the organization called his two assistants into his office.

"Mac," he began, "and you, Johnny. Maybe I'm an old man in my dotage, although I don't think so. At all events—for you know conditions as well as I do—I owe you some explanation. I don't know just how to put it." Here he ran his fingers slowly through his whitening hair.

"The case of Miss Brynn is a rather exceptional one. She came in to me and practically insisted that she be put to work—said she'd be glad to start in for fifty cents a week or for nothing if I'd only give her a chance. She seems to be a girl of rather unusual qualities and of a most unusual determination. Most girls, as you know, simply want jobs—and the twenty or twenty-five or thirty dollars a week that goes with them. But this girl looks at the thing as a man would. She wants a start."

"Yes," broke in McAndless, "but why pick on us? How in thunder can we take on anybody the way things are now?"

The older man smiled. "Miss Brynn,"

he said, "has an urgent reason for needing to go to work—like a man. She told me about it, quite frankly, and asked me to say nothing of it. I can only tell you that her reason seemed to me urgent enough—coupled with her sincerity—to stretch a point. She made up her mind to get into the advertising business, and she chose this agency—made some inquiries, I believe—and that was all there was to it. She thinks she can write, which I always doubt without evidence, but if she's as good a salesman as she seems to be, I for one want to have her right here."

"Yes," persisted McAndless, a puzzled look in his eyes, "that's all right enough, chief, but since you've made me responsible for the bank-roll of this concern will you please tell me how in blazes we're going to carry her? Two of the stenogs are kicking for raises now, and we can't spare a dollar. And you can't take somebody on at no salary at all. That never works."

"I thought about that," said Mr. Prence. "It must be obvious to you, Mac, that I wouldn't have done a thing like this without consulting you unless there were some reason why I couldn't consult you. In this case there seems to be such a reason—and please believe me when I say that all of us will be doing a mighty good deed if we can help in any way to give this Miss Brynn a hand. She's never worked in her life before, but she means business. She's a fine kid, I'm sure, and for my own part I'm proud that she's going to be with us. I told her, Mac, that we'd start her at fifteen a week."

"Holy smoke!" breathed McAndless. But once more the head of the organization smiled.

"The fifteen," he stated, his eyes twinkling, "will come out of my own drawing account—though she must never know that. Does that suit you, Mac?"

"No," said McAndless, "it doesn't. If it's a case like that I want to do my share."

"Me too," said young DeVane promptly. "There's no reason why you should carry the whole load, chief. I don't know what it's about, but I'm with you."

"Why, bless your hearts!" Mr. Prence stood up, walked to the window, walked back to his desk. "Mac," he said, "I won't take a cent from you because your wife and your three kids need every nickel you drag out of here, but you, Johnny——"

"Five dollars a week," said the boy.

His employer eyed him fondly.

"Make it three, Johnny, and I'll take it. I'll arrange to charge it against the concern, and some day, by the grace of God, we'll both get it back."

"Makes me feel like a piker," McAndless grumbled.

"No, Mac. You'll be doing your share if you can find a blessed thing for her to do. Part of our job is to make her feel she's really working like mad—and that, as we know, is a little difficult when there isn't any work."

"I could start her transferring those old files," mused McAndless. "Can she type or take dictation?"

"Neither."

"H'm! Well, I'll find something." McAndless stood up and young DeVane with him. "Anything else, chief?"

"Not a thing. I only wish there were."

Johnny DeVane started to say something, checked himself, flushed.

"Mr. Prence," he finally blurted out, "did you say Miss or Mrs. Brynn?"

"She's not married, Johnny, if that's what you want to know. But I wouldn't think about that if I were you."

"I wasn't, sir," said the boy. But both McAndless and Mr. Prence smiled.

SUCH was the first appearance of Barbara Brynn in the offices of the Prence Advertising Agency. Little by little, in one way or another, Ebenezer Prence had pieced out the story. It made him smile pleasantly, even now, to think of it. But the leather-framed calendar by his side and his watch, which told him that the hour was five-forty, combined to give him again his feeling of panic. In a few moments now he would be face to face with Judge Cullingham, face to face with the man to whom some instinct above reason told him he must explain this story.

Ebenezer Prence rose, crossed the room, sat down nervously upon the settee at the opposite side. He was not concentrating properly. He knew that and the knowledge irritated him. Pictures, isolated scenes flashed through his mind. And of what use were they?

He saw Barbara, always Barbara, flitting busily about the office, her blue eyes grave while things were being explained to her, sparkling when she took hold. She used to hum at her work, as a mother hums beside a cradle, contentedly, quietly triumphant. Once at noon, when the office was presumably empty, Ebenezer had come out of his private room to surprise her singing out loud. Though he pretended to be shocked it had pleased him, and Barbara knew it.

Another picture! Little Johnny DeVane pounding his right fist into his open left palm, trying to explain to Barbara the things which differentiate good advertising from bad. Johnny very serious and businesslike, his eyes flashing, his hair rumpled. Barbara, in a gray dress, wide-eyed and attentive, furtively taking notes.

"Don't do that," Johnny had said. "Don't write down any rules. There aren't any rules. Just listen. Be a blotter. Absorb what you can, reject what you please, then show results your own way."

Still another picture, like the slides they show between films in a movie theater! McAndless this time, steady-going Mac, throwing open the door of the private office with an unwonted cheer in his eye.

"Give a million guesses, chief," he had exulted. "Do you know what that little pup Johnny has gone and done? You'll never guess. Turned Miss Brynn loose writing copy for perfume—no particular perfume—just perfume! Told her the sky was the limit. Told her to write just like a woman, just like she felt. They never say a word about it to anybody—I've noticed 'em giggling together for the last month. Well, all on the quiet he does a little revising of her stuff, hooks it up with some crack layouts—dandies, chief; wait till you see 'em—and then he sneaks out, by gum, and lands the Parisian people for a forty-thousand-dollar campaign! Those two kids, chief! Forty thousand dollars!" McAndless mopped his forehead vehemently and then added: "Fifteen per cent. Those two kids have as good as made us a present of six thousand cool ducats. Why, chief, we're back on the map again!"

This last picture faded out; the screen of Ebenezer's mind went somehow blank. Then suddenly, satisfyingly, it was as if the clicking whir of a motion-picture machine had resumed. A sense of sequence, of power swept through him, a new realization that the story he had to tell was being flashed to him, reeled off for him in much the way he himself must flash it, hammer it if need be, into the mind and heart of the man he had come to see.

August now! A muggy, misty, drizzly August afternoon, with the office exceedingly quiet and jumbled sounds of traffic crowding up from the street ten floors below. For an hour past not even the telephone had jangled its hopeful interruption. Ebenezer remembered that he had been dozing in his chair, because when the door opened he jumped.

It was Johnny DeVane, without his smile.

"Busy, chief?"

"Not a bit, Johnny. Sit down. Dull day."

"I mean can you give me half an hour, all alone?" Something about the boy's face as he asked this question made Mr. Prence sit up.

"Something serious, John? What's the matter? You can have all day and all night, any time—you know that."

Young DeVane seated himself, leaned toward the older man. He started to speak, checked himself, gulped, and when his voice finally conquered, it sounded as the shell of a voice.

"Barbara!" he said, and stopped.

Ebenezer Prence grimaced. Sitting there in his chair he experienced the abrupt feeling—he remembered it long afterward—of dropping in an express elevator.

"What about her, Johnny?" he asked evenly.

"She told me to come to you," said the boy. "She said you'd tell me. She said she couldn't. Will you—please—tell me?"

"What, John? What am I to tell you?"

"I don't know, sir. That's why I'm asking. This noon, chief"—the boy laughed mirthlessly—"we were eating lunch together, in Childs'. Crazy place to pick. I told her then——"

"What, Johnny? Please give me a little idea what this is all about."

YOUNG DeVane flushed red. "I'm sorry," he mumbled. "I forgot. That part of it is such old stuff to me that I forgot." He looked the older man in the eye. "I asked her to marry me. I've been in love with her—just terribly—since the first day, I think. I thought everybody knew that. I know she didn't, but I thought everybody else must. Couldn't anybody tell?" His eyes reënforced his question.

"No, John. I may have been blind, but I didn't guess."

The boy stood up. "Well, I am in love with her," he stated, almost fiercely. "It's all there is in life for me, Mr. Prence. Maybe you don't know."

"I think I know," said the other softly.

"And Barbara," the boy went on, "Barbara—I'm sure she likes me. She cried. Oh, it was terrible! We've been sitting out in Madison Square, sitting and walking around, ever since. She said she wanted to keep me as a friend—that she couldn't think of it—ever! Not ever, chief! And then she said at last that she couldn't tell me—I don't see why she couldn't—but that you would. Well—here I am."

Ebenezer Prence pulled open his right-hand desk drawer, took out a cigar, bit the end off, lit it carefully.

"Sit down, Johnny," he finally said. "There—that's better. No use acting like a caged hyena. That doesn't solve anything. H'm! I wish I'd thought of this. I wouldn't have had it happen for anything."

"What is it that you've got to tell me?" demanded the boy.

"Barbara," said Ebenezer slowly, "Barbara took this job here, and I gave it to her, because she is engaged to be married to a man— Steady there, son!"

"All right, sir," said DeVane, and sat down. He had risen sharply to his feet.

"Listen to what I'm saying, Johnny. She became engaged to him during the early part of the war, when people were doing that sort of thing. She had only met him twice, so she tells me. Anyway, that doesn't matter. He came back pretty well battered up. A piece of shrapnel in his head somewhere, I believe, among other things. Very fine chap, as far as I can learn. He hung around a couple of years before they'd give him his discharge. Got restless, naturally; wanted to get out and earn a living. Wanted to get married, Barbara says. She was sticking to him. She would."

"Was she in love with him?" asked young DeVane icily.

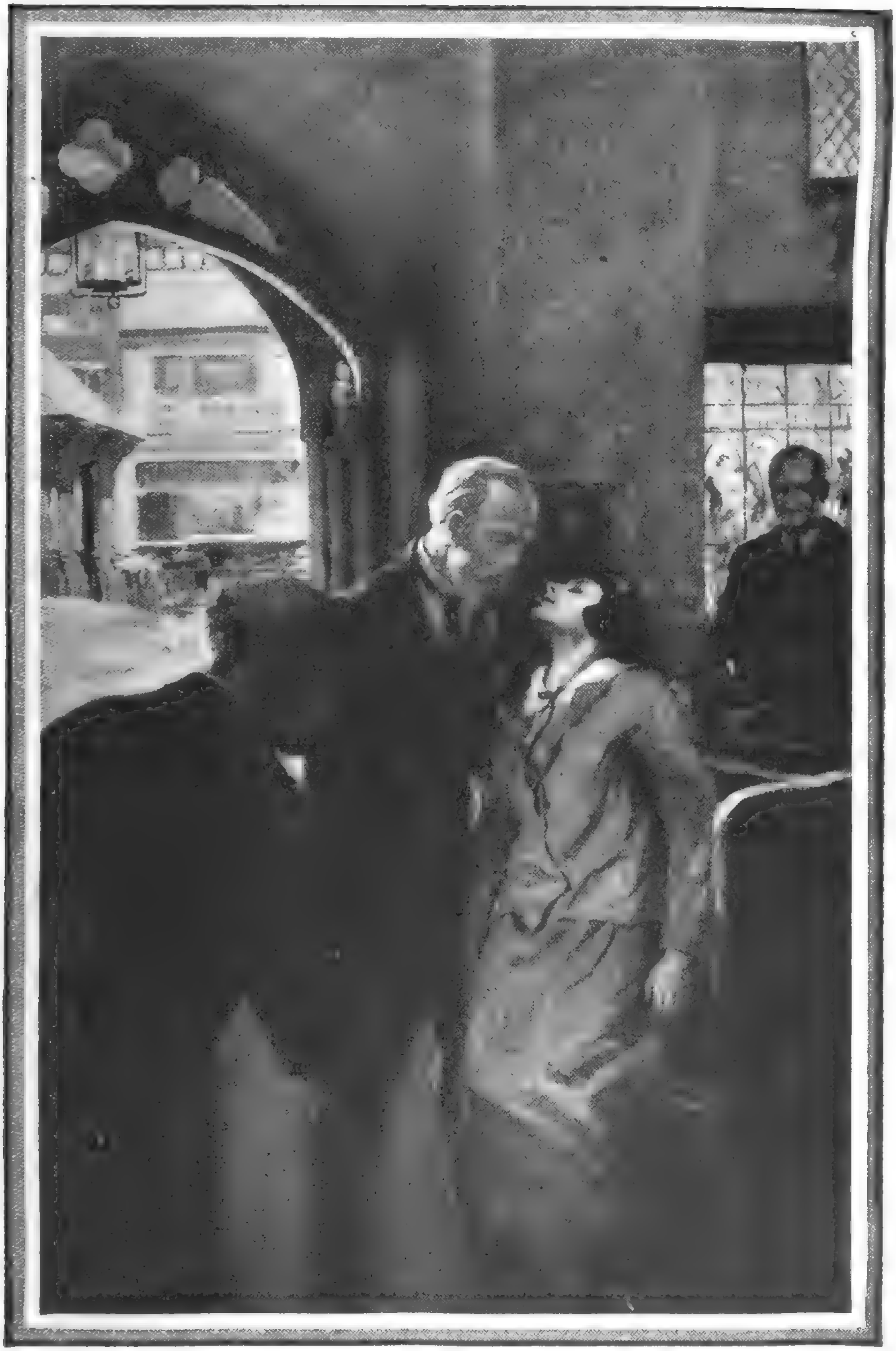
"That has nothing to do with it, Johnny. I don't know whether she was or not. Anyway, she stuck. He got some sort of an outdoor job; wasn't making much, but everything was going fine, considering he'd lost the use of one arm and suffered pretty constantly, on and off, from pains in his head. Barbara told me all this that first day. Anyway, last March or April, one day something slipped—the doctors don't know what—and within a week he was stone-blind. Permanently, they say. Blind! Which seems enough, but it wasn't. Because he was not only blind but stony-broke in addition, and except for Barbara pretty much alone in the world."

"What about Barbara?" asked the boy dully.

"YOU know Barbara, John," said Ebenezer Prence. "She did exactly what you'd expect. He wanted to commit suicide, but Barbara somehow stopped him. She mothered him through the first stages of his horror. Then she took hold. She faked a lot of special correspondence with the Government and began handing him out extra money on top of his disability pay. She got a nice room for him, with a landlady who'd really keep her eye on him. She hired a young college chap to read to him and entertain him two hours a day. And she tried to get him to marry her."

"Why? Why did she have to do that?" The words seemed to squeeze out between Johnny DeVane's set teeth.

"Because she's a fine girl, son. They come that way sometimes. And because he needed her and, I imagine, was in love with her. Anyway, I admire him too. He refused. He said that he'd marry her, if she still wanted to, under two conditions, only. The first was that he would learn some trade for the blind, so he could at least help to support her. The second was that she go ahead with the plan which he knew had always been her one ambition—namely, to take at least a year in the School of Journalism. That's what all the secrecy's about, John. This man, apparently, is really in love with her—and proud. He's working now—rather, learning to work. And Barbara is supposed to be studying at the School of Journalism. Of course she is going to support him—but she is sure he will never find it out. Her name is not even Brynn—although Barbara is real. Did she tell you that?"



Ebenezer laid his arm gently about her shoulders and drew her close. "Look up at me, dear. Yes, it may be serious. Steady there, girlie!"

Ebenezer Prence now leaned forward and fixed the younger man with his eyes.

"That is the story, John. That's all there is to it. Barbara looks upon what she is doing as a sort of consecration. Personally I doubt very much if she loves him, by the standards of what I call love. But she has consecrated herself to him, as to a principle, and she'll go through. And I think she'll be very happy all her life. So, Johnny, my boy, make it as easy for her as you can. That's why she couldn't tell you, son—don't you see? Because you'd have made it hard. Without meaning to you'd have made it hard."

Ebenezer smiled gruesomely and sat back.

"OH, CHIEF, that's all just horrible!" the boy said presently.

"No, son. Not horrible. I think it's rather wonderful. It's as wonderful a thing as either you or I will probably ever see. Of course, Johnny, this is all between us."

"Of course!" DeVane brushed the thought aside irritably. "But poor Barbara! Poor little devil!"

After he had gone Ebenezer let a few minutes drag by. Then he reached for his desk telephone.

"Please ask Miss Brynn to come in to my office," he directed. He waited, drumming upon the top of his desk, until presently the door creaked open.

He had never realized before how tiny Barbara was. She seemed shrunken, her eyes three sizes too large and too dark for her head.

"Sit down, Barbara," said Ebenezer kindly. Then: "Johnny has just been in here."

"Yes," said the girl in a voice that was strangely unlike her own, "I know."

"Johnny's a fine boy, Barbara."

"Please," she said weakly.

"H'm!" Ebenezer ran his fingers through his hair, as was his habit when trying to find words. "Will you answer me two questions honestly?" he finally asked. He watched her while she hesitated before her slow nod of assent.

"Are you in love with this man Watson to whom you're engaged?"

"That's not a fair question," said the girl quickly. "You know it's not. I love him enough to marry him, and he needs me and I'm going to."

"I'm sorry, Barbara. I withdraw the question. But you can answer my second. Are you in love with Johnny?"

She dropped her eyes, reddening. But then she raised her head and met Ebenezer's gaze squarely. "I couldn't be, Mr. Prence. I haven't even let myself think of it. I couldn't be—could I?"

"Don't ask me, my dear. I'm asking you."

"No," she said deliberately, "I'm not. But I like him so much. Why can't Johnny and I just stay friends, Mr. Prence? Can't we?"

"Johnny will play the game, Barbara. We can trust him for that. And if you can trust yourself——"

"Oh, I can! I'm sure I can. I suppose I ought to give up my job and go away, but you know—I can't—I wouldn't know what——"

"I don't think you'd better consider that, my dear. If I thought so I'd suggest it. But I don't know. And I'm afraid it might leave a scar—the kind that grows. No—you'd better see each other normally. And now that Johnny knows——"

"Of course!" she said hopefully. "That'll make it different."

That was in August. To Ebenezer it had come with the shock of a catastrophe, for Ebenezer, who was childless, had much the affection of a father for Johnny DeVane, and his fondness for Barbara was a thing which had given him constant and ever increasing delight. He was paternally proud of them both and, man-fashion, it had simply never occurred to him that either of them could ever feel anything for the other but a similar friendly kinship. What had happened troubled him because he knew how infinitely more it must be troubling them. And beyond that he felt an uneasiness.

But nothing happened. Johnny reported back two days later with the simple statement that everything was now all right.

"I read myself the riot act," he said succinctly. "You needn't worry about me, sir, any more. I'll play the game—and I can." After that day Johnny never spoke of what had happened, nor did Barbara.

Ebenezer felt cooped up in his private office, for he would have liked to be able to watch them together. He wished he were in a position to take McAndless into his confidence, for Mac was out there where he could use his ears and eyes.

Nevertheless, everything seemed to be running smoothly enough. Johnny and Barbara worked side by side and they laughed and fooled together as of old. But Ebenezer noticed two significant facts: Johnny DeVane's eyes didn't always smile when his mouth did. And Barbara no longer sang.

TOWARD the last of September Barbara one day quietly announced to the office that she was going to be married. How soon? When? October 25! There was a buzz of excitement, of course, for none of the force but Ebenezer and Johnny had known she was even engaged. The girls clustered about her. McAndless solemnly shook her hand and advised her to settle down in the suburbs. Roderick, beaming, brought her in a half-dozen roses upon his return from lunch.

"Sort of thought you and Mr. DeVane was going to pull it off," he said half sheepishly.

Barbara laughed.

No one heard what Johnny himself said to her. He went over to her desk and took her hand and said something, at which she smiled up at him very sweetly. Then he turned away.

At five that afternoon Johnny again walked into Ebenezer's office.

"Barbara will stay on, won't she?" he asked. "I mean after she's married."

"I think so, John. I'm sure she plans to. She'll have to."

The boy dropped his eyes.

"I don't want this to sound foolish," he said after a moment, "but I think I'll move on, Mr. Prence. Get a job in Chicago or somewhere, if you'll help me."

Ebenezer drew back. "Why, Johnny!" he began.

"Please, Mr. Prence! I've made up my mind. You see—I can play the game, sir, but I can't play it—not indefinitely. Not after—then." He smiled boyishly, miserably. "I guess I care too much, sir."

"But, John——"

"I'll stay until the twenty-fifth, Mr. Prence—right up to that day. That'll give us plenty of time to clean everything up. Of course you won't tell Barbara—not till after she comes back. And by then I'll be all settled in a new job somewhere." He hesitated. "I guess she'll understand," he added, as if to himself.

"But won't that just make it harder?" Ebenezer pressed.

"No, sir, it won't. It would have been easier—better—if I hadn't stayed—at all. It's too—too unnatural. I—I can't explain it. I haven't said a word to her. I don't know why I stayed. Waiting for a miracle, I suppose." He laughed softly, bitterly, and then in a whisper scoffed, "Miracle!"

Once more after Johnny DeVane had left his office Ebenezer sent for Barbara.

"Are you happy, my dear?" he asked as she seated herself beside his desk.

She lifted her head. "Yes," she stated, "I am."

"God bless you then!" was all Ebenezer could find words to say. Then, seeing that she was waiting, he added: "That's all, girlie. Run along home—and be happy, always. I just wanted to wish you luck."

Seated now in the strangers' room of the most austere club in New York, watching the doorway through which at any moment Judge Cullingham might enter, Ebenezer Prence had the satisfaction of feeling that step by step, perhaps not adequately but at least intelligibly, he had reviewed Barbara's story up to date. For it had been this very morning, with her wedding set for the morrow at high noon, that she had come into his office—sidled in, nervously twisting her hands, looking about her stealthily, fearsomely, as if to make sure that she and her employer were genuinely alone—it had been this very morning that Barbara had thrown the final bomb.

"MR. PRENCE," she had begun, then halted, fixing him strangely with her eyes.

"Yes, Barbara. Sit down." Even then Ebenezer had sensed the impending of tragedy.

"If anything happens to me," said the girl, speaking slowly and with hesitation, "if anything should ever happen to me—oh, I can trust you, can't I?"

"I hope so, my dear. I think you can trust me with anything in the world that has to do with you."

"If anything happens to me," she repeated as if she had rehearsed her speech many times, "or if anything happens to him—I mean if he's terribly sick or anything—or anything!—will you tell him, if you ever think he needs to know—I mean if it will save his life or help him or anything—will you tell him," she hesitated, then plunged, "tell him that I love him—that I truly love him, with all my heart and mind and body and soul? Will you tell him that—if he ever needs to know? I—I just had to tell you, I guess. Oh, I do love him so—I do, I do!" Her head was up, her eyes alight. She might have been speaking to unseen angels.

Ebenezer gripped his chair.

"Johnny?" he asked quietly.

Barbara stared blankly at the older man.

"Of course," she said.

Ebenezer said nothing. There was nothing to say.

"What are you thinking?" the girl suddenly demanded. "Are you thinking that I'm wicked? Am I wicked? I don't care if I am. I'm doing what I think's right."

"I think I understand, my dear. But, Barbara"—Ebenezer chose his words—"are you sure you are doing what's wise, what's best?"

"I know I am, Mr. Prence."

"But you don't love the man you are going to marry, and you do love somebody else!"

"I love Oscar enough, Mr. Prence, though in"—she laughed hysterically—"in a different way. And besides, Johnny has two good eyes—and so have I. We can stand it, both of us."

"But don't you think Johnny should know—now?" Ebenezer felt entirely lost.

"No," said the girl definitely. "I've thought it all out. Only if something—you know what I mean, Mr. Prence!" She leaned forwardly impulsively and took the older man's hands. "Hold me tight for a minute," she pleaded.

"But, Barbara dear!" Ebenezer was still fumbling within the swirl of his turbulent thoughts. "Barbara, don't you think—wouldn't it be fairer—if he knew the truth—Oscar, I mean—now? Wouldn't that be fairer?"

Barbara jumped up, her eyes wide.

"Oh, heavens, no! He—I'm all he has—I mean I know how he feels. I think—I'm afraid—he'd kill himself. I'm very sure he would! He—he's so proud, Mr. Prence, and he feels—well, so utterly useless and everything even as things are. Oh, no! No, no!" She shook her head violently. "He mustn't ever know. I can trust you for that—oh, can't I?"

Ebenezer half closed his eyes, leaned wearily back in his chair.

"I'm afraid you can, honey. I only wish I knew what to do. I wish I knew. Love is such a rare thing, Barbara dear, such a rare and precious thing. And I wouldn't have you needlessly wreck two lives—yours and Johnny's. Can't you wait, Barbara—let it drift along a little while longer?"

She shook her head. There was a finality to that shake.

"But you and Johnny, Barbara—loving each other——"

The girl smiled, still automatically shaking her head, her eyes veiled and wistful and far away. "That would be heaven," she whispered, "just heaven! Perhaps some day, somehow, some miracle——"

"That's the word Johnny used," put in Ebenezer.

"Oh, did he? Did he, truly? Oh, isn't that wonderful?" And suddenly Barbara's head was down on Ebenezer's lap, her two arms clinging tight about his legs; and presently Ebenezer felt a little patch on his left knee growing warm and moist under her burrowing face.

"There, there!" he murmured over and over, patting and stroking her head. But after she had gone he stared fixedly at the wall for a long, long time, and then he stood up and set his teeth.

ALL day Ebenezer had fought the thing out with himself. He, Ebenezer Prence, had been given the key to a human tragedy, a key to use if he only knew how, a key which could perhaps unlock one unhappiness only to seal another irrevocably. Questions flooded his mind, questions and counter-questions.

Was Barbara doing the right thing? He didn't know. Was she doing the wise thing, the thing that would make for happiness—either her own or that of the blind boy she was marrying? Ebenezer didn't know. Shouldn't Johnny, who loved Barbara, be told before it was too late—before to-morrow noon when Barbara would have said "I do"? Shouldn't the blind boy himself be told—know the truth—for if he really loved Barbara wouldn't he want her happiness above his own? Wouldn't he eventually find out, anyway? Would he, as Barbara thought, find nothing left in life if she should be lost to him? Was Barbara doing all this just to save him, perhaps, just to save him from—that other thing? Ebenezer rubbed his hand across his forehead. Then abruptly he went out upon the streets and began to walk.

It was about five o'clock when he had thought of Judge Cullingham, the bald-headed jurist, long since famous, who believed in the law before the law, who had made his last campaign for the bench and run far ahead of his ticket on the platform that crime should not be brought to the courts but prevented before it ever came into being. There had been much publicity, of course. Cullingham had flung forth the challenge that he could prove to any criminal who would come to him, and come clean, before committing a crime, that he could more profitably and more soundly gain his ends by taking other means. The papers had printed the story of one man, tempted to do murder, who had gone to the judge—and come clean—and who had been set right. The man had made many statements, exceedingly effusive, and the Sunday editions had run stories with lurid drawings of what might have happened but hadn't. Naturally there had been a good deal of laughter, but Cullingham's point had registered itself in the public mind. It had registered itself in Ebenezer's mind.

He was looking at his watch for what seemed the fiftieth time when a man appeared in the doorway. Ebenezer looked up. The man was bald, totally bald, his head pink and shiny and bare; but there was a massiveness about that head and about that body which carried it and a massiveness about the very features of the face which converted this man's baldness into an asset of distinction.

"Is this Mr. Prence?" the stranger asked in a slow, deep voice.

"Yes."

"I am Judge Cullingham. You wish to see me?"

"I do. I have come to see you about a crime worse than murder, which is to be committed to-morrow at noon. I know how to stop it. I can at least delay it. I don't know whether to stop it or not. Delaying it or stopping it may entail actual murder or what amounts to it." Ebenezer paused to let his words make themselves understood. Then: "Is there any room here where we may talk alone?"

Judge Cullingham was boring into Ebenezer's eyes with his own. He seemed to be weighing, appraising. For what might have been a full minute he stood so, his gaze never wavering. Then suddenly his face relaxed.

"Please come with me," he said. "There is a room upstairs."

"Thank God!" breathed Ebenezer to himself, and took out his handkerchief to mop his forehead.

IT WAS ten o'clock when the two men came down in the elevator. They had dined privately. Ebenezer had talked. Judge Cullingham had watched him, catlike, occasionally cutting in with a pointed query. Now as they stood upon the white marble steps which Ebenezer had mounted so hastily hours ago they halted wearily.

"Well," said Ebenezer, "I suppose you're right."

"I'm sure I'm right," explained the judge. "This is the sort of case which the Lord meant to work itself out. If you say anything to this boy DeVane you'll have a temporary maniac on your hands—and so will Barbara, which is worse. If you say anything to this poor blind fellow Watson I am rather convinced you will find yourself a murderer. From what you say of him and from what I can read between the lines—yes, he is the type to end the business. Your little Barbara senses that, as I do. So—stay out. . . . You say the wedding's to be to-morrow at noon, at the Little Church Around the Corner?"

"Yes."

"May I be there, Prence? You have rather admitted me into your paternal status."

"Of course," said Ebenezer. "Come, by all means."

"I want to meet Barbara," the judge said quietly. "This country needs girls like that. The whole world needs 'em."

"You bet. Cullingham, I don't need to tell you how grateful I am. I'm sorry I made you miss that engagement."

"I'm not," the judge said. "I think I'll walk home. Mild night."

"Me, too," said Ebenezer. "Need air. If possible let me trudge along with you—same direction, I think——"

At Seventy-fourth Street they turned east.

"Right on my way," explained the judge. "I'll drop you at your door and roll along."

BUT at Ebenezer's door, which was the doorway to an old and conservative residence of the brownstone period, they found huddled upon the stoop a limp little bundle of humanity in a crumpled blue dress.

"Oh, Mr. Prence!" exclaimed Barbara, jumping up. "I've been waiting so long. I was afraid you'd done something—gone and seen Oscar or something. Oh, I was so afraid! I couldn't go to bed without knowing. I couldn't sleep."

Ebenezer put his arm about her. She was shivering and he held her close.

"No, Barbara dear. I haven't seen anybody. I've been dining with Judge Cullingham. Aren't you a foolish little girl?"

Barbara nodded perfunctorily but otherwise ignored the stranger completely. It was as if he wasn't there.

"No, I'm not foolish," she said, her eyes childlike. "All day long, Daddy Prence, I've been so afraid you'd do something. You won't, will you?"

"No, dear, I promise I won't."

"Oh, that's wonderful! I knew you wouldn't but I've been so afraid." She laughed jerkily, catching him by the lapels of his coat. "I've been so terribly tempted," she added ingenuously. "I knew you wouldn't—but half the time—oh, I know I must be wicked!—I've sort of hoped— Oh, Daddy Prence, take me home! Please—quick! I only came here—truly—to make sure everything was all right. You promise me everything's all right, don't you?"

Over his shoulder Ebenezer was acknowledging Judge Cullingham's nodded good night.

"I promise you, Barbara," he told her, tightening his arm about her. "I have promised you, dear. No wonder you're upset—but you're doing the right thing, honey, and you're a dear, brave, splendid little girl—and the rest we must leave in the hands of the Lord. Come along now, and we'll find ourselves a taxi."

Ebenezer lay long awake that night. The problem was settled, that was true. He felt in his heart that Judge Cullingham was right. This was not the sort of business in which intervention, however well meant, could be set down as anything but criminal meddling. Barbara was Barbara and in things concerning Barbara only her instinct was to be trusted. To do other than what she was doing must result, inevitably and eternally, in recrimination and misery. Yet in a separate corner of his heart Ebenezer acknowledged the feeling that what Barbara believed to be right was nevertheless wrong indeed.

Still harassed by this dual conviction, he went heavily to his office next morning, with the wedding itself less than three hours away. Johnny DeVane was waiting for him, a Johnny who was a little too cheerful, a little too briskly businesslike.

"Everything cleaned up, chief," the boy reported. "I think I'll pull out now. Of course I'll drop in on and off when I'm in town. Leaving for Detroit on the Wolverine—four o'clock."

"Well, Johnny," Ebenezer could think of nothing else to say, "life's life."

Sitting there looking down at his knees, the boy was apparently fumbling for words.

"I—I suppose I ought to have left yesterday, Mr. Prence. But somehow—well, I just couldn't." He laughed deprecatingly. "I suppose I've been waiting for that miracle—like a condemned man waiting for a pardon that never comes."

"God works in years, son," said Ebenezer, "not in minutes."

"I know." Johnny nodded dully. Then he said: "I'll be over at the club, sir, waiting for the train. Would you mind—just so I'll know—will you come over—afterwards—and just tell me? And tell Barbara—no, don't tell her anything. I don't know what to tell her. God knows I wish I could be there, but I can't." He fastened upon Ebenezer the eyes of a suppliant dog. "You understand why I can't, sir, don't you?"

"Yes, Johnny. I understand more than you think. And you can count on seeing me by two o'clock."

Later in the morning McAndless came in for his final instructions; McAndless in all the dignity of striped trousers and a cutaway coat. Steady old Mac was to go uptown and get the groom.

"He'll be nervous, Mac," said Ebenezer, "so be particularly careful. Get him to the church by 11:45, but not much before that, as the standing around and waiting is an awful strain. You probably remember it yourself."

"You're going to take care of Barbara?" McAndless asked.

"Yes, I'm going to bring her to the church and she has asked me to give her away. Remember, old man, no talk about the office to Watson. He won't know you from Adam, of course. I believe I'm to be a professor at the School of Journalism or an old family friend. Barbara hadn't made up her mind but she's going to tell me which. I don't like the deceit but Barbara seems to know what she wants. Just you and I are going to be there, you know—oh, yes, and Roderick! Has Johnny said anything to you?"

McAndless nodded soberly. "Yes—the poor little old cuss! Pretty hard hit. Well, I don't blame him. I'd like to see those two——"

"Me too, Mac," said Ebenezer, "but let's forget that."

AN HOUR later Ebenezer ushered Barbara out of a taxicab at the door of the church. All the way from her boarding-house he had shot covert and uncomprehending glances at her, for her eyes were sparkling and her cheeks were pink.

"Happy, dear?" he had asked, stroking her hand.

"Yes, yes!" she had replied with emphasis.

Now Roderick was lumbering down the curving walk to meet them. He had been standing, peering streetward, in the vestibule of the tree-shadowed church.

"My, you're early, Miss Barbara!" he chaffed. "Wonderful thing, this gettin' married. Can't be too early, I say."

"Is—is he here yet?" the girl asked.

"Lordy, no! Mr. Mac wasn't goin' to get him here till just in time." He fished out a ponderous watch. "Twenty minutes yet," he announced. "By the way, Mr. Prence, there's a gentleman here—said he was a friend of yours—bald-headed gentleman. He's there waitin'."

"That's Judge Cullingham," said Ebenezer. "He was greatly interested, Barbara. He asked if he might come. I took the liberty——"

"Of course," she said graciously.

Within the vestibule Ebenezer once more introduced Barbara and the judge.

"It is a great privilege to meet you," the jurist stated in his slow, deep voice. "And it is a great privilege to be able to be here. But please don't pay any attention to me. You have far more momentous things on your mind." He smiled.

Barbara laughed nervously.

"It seems to me—isn't it about time?" she asked presently. "You're sure Mr. McAndless is with him, Mr. Prence?"

"I'm as sure as anybody can be, Barbara. You know old Mac. Reliable is his middle name."

She sighed in acceptance but stationed herself by the door. The minister, who had come down among them in his robes, suggested that probably there had been a traffic jam. Barbara nodded absently.

"So many things could happen to him," she said after a moment. "He's so helpless, you know. I really should have come down with him myself. Only it was sort of fun to plan doing it—this way. Just as if—" She broke off, biting her lip.

Back in the dusky twilight of the church the organ was sounding softly. There were flowers in the church, white flowers banked about the chancel; white roses they were, which Ebenezer had sent because this wedding, of all weddings, must be rose-petaled. Their fragrance wafted out through the doorway and Ebenezer drank it in. But Barbara stood and looked toward the street and twisted her hands.

"It's still early, dear," Ebenezer told her stoutly. "Ten minutes early. You mustn't get yourself all upset."

"Where's Roderick going?" she asked over her shoulder.

Roderick, who had been standing by the gate, had started hatless toward Fifth Avenue. A second later he was lost behind the angle of the business building which stood as a shield between the green-lawned sanctuary of the church and the roaring thoroughfare so near at hand.

"He has probably seen them," Ebenezer suggested. "Going down the street to meet them."

But long minutes went by and Roderick did not come back.

"Something has happened," the girl said, her face ghostly white. "I'll be right back."

Ebenezer caught her arm. "You stay right here, Barbara. We're not going to have this whole party running around the streets. The minute you go he'll show up."

"But something has happened," she insisted in a flat voice. "I just know it."

"There are fifty things that could have happened," put in Judge Cullingham quietly. "I have had taxicabs break down with me a dozen times. I even know of one groom who couldn't find his trousers—delayed his wedding an hour and nobody believed his excuse. Ah, here's your man Roderick!"

The negro turned in at the gate and came swiftly up the walk. He signaled with his head to Ebenezer, signaled significantly. There was no smile upon his face.

EBENEZER stepped forward. "Wait here, Barbara," he directed. Then quietly, "What is it, Roderick?"

"Pretty bad, sir. Accident. They're down there by the corner now," Roderick said. "Sent for an ambulance but it looks like it's too late. He got Mr. Mac to stop the cab, Mr. Mac says. Said he wanted to walk to the church——"

"Who, Roderick?"

"The blind one, the one Miss Barbara—" The negro stopped himself. "Seems like he waited till he heard one of them big busses comin' along and then jumped right out in front of it. Might have been an accident—nobody knows. But Mr. Mac says he jumped, like. Yanked right away from his arm."

"Good heavens, Roderick! Is he dead?"

"Doctor says so—two doctors been workin' on him."

Ebenezer wheeled abruptly back to the group upon the steps of the church. Barbara's hands were fluttering at her throat. Her eyes were wide.

"There's been an accident," he said calmly. "Nothing serious, Barbara, I think. If you'll wait here, please—better sit down inside, dear. I'll be right back."

"Accident?" Barbara's syllables came in a husked whisper. "You mean——"

"Yes, honey." Ebenezer laid his arm gently about her shoulders and then drew her close. "Look up at me, dear. Yes, it may be serious. Steady there, girlie! Steady!" He changed his hold.

"Let her down easy, boss," said Roderick. "She's fainted."

But for a fond moment Ebenezer looked down at the little white face that lay flopped against his arm.

"You poor little thing!" he muttered, his voice choked. "To have it happen this way! But, dear, you've got your miracle! You and Johnny—your miracle!"

Ebenezer had forgotten the bald-headed man who had been standing close by his side. That was perhaps natural, for Judge Cullingham had disappeared. With his hat in his hand he had tiptoed inside the church. Into a pew at the side he had made his way, an odd nimbus of softened light marking his head in that dusky interior. There at the far end of the pew, upon his knees, he was praying to God.

The Complete Novel for March

'Nastasia

By Robert Welles Ritchie

WHEN Soviet plotters match wits with Celtic blood and newspaper training stirring adventure follows—even if it does take place in a London fog.

March *Everybody's* Out February 15

Introducing a New Author

Truthful James

"James Jordan Is All Right," Said His Boss. "Nobody That Loafs or Drinks or Lies Can Work for Me." But Oh, What a Difference When Delilah Appeared!

By William Upson

MR. DUNN, the grim old president of the Akron National Bank, brought his big fist down on the table with a bang and spoke with emphasis.

"Absolutely!" he said. "James Jordan never told a lie in his life. 'Truthful James.' That's what everybody calls him."

Across the desk, Mr. Horace Eliot and Mr. John McGinnis nodded with approval.

From an armchair in the corner came a quick rustling as Miss Dorothy Eliot laid down her magazine and sat up with sudden attention. Miss Eliot had accompanied her father to the bank and was waiting for him to finish this wearisome business conference with Mr. Dunn. Afterward they were to go and pick out a car which her father had promised her for her birthday. It was Saturday morning. It was mid-June. It was hot. And she had almost fallen asleep.

But here all at once was something interesting: "Truthful James." "Never told a lie in his life." Who could he be, this moral marvel—this modern George Washington? She decided to listen and hear more.

Mr. Eliot was now speaking. Besides being Dorothy's father, he was mayor of Akron, and one of the city's most prominent business men.

"The Akron Rubber Corporation," he said, "needs a big man for treasurer. Of course he must be honest. And he must understand banking and finance."

"Young Jordan is your man," said Dunn, "although of course he has had no experience yet in such an important job."

"I'd rather have a young man. He's more apt to have energy, initiative and enthusiasm. Am I right, McGinnis?"

Mr. McGinnis nodded silently. He was Mr. Eliot's lawyer, and was a little man of somewhat coarse appearance, with a bloated look under the eyes. He sat with his pudgy hands folded over the handle of an umbrella which he held between his knees.

"James Jordan is all right," said Dunn. "If he weren't he wouldn't be here. Nobody that loafs or drinks or lies can work for me. I'm a hard man. All my employees are good, but he's the best of the lot. Just like his father—one of the finest men I ever knew." The bank president pointed out over the low partition that separated his office from the space behind the tellers' cages. "There he is—the young man with the blond hair, third desk against the wall."

"Ah, yes!" said Eliot. "A fine-looking young man."

The attentive Miss Eliot turned slightly, and arching her delicate eyebrows, stared with frank interest. "A fine-looking young man," she repeated to herself. Yes, he was all of that. Altogether too handsome to be wasting himself in a stupid bank. And probably spending all his spare time at the Y. M. C. A. She felt that he was needed in the movies, especially now that Rodolph had deserted them.

The young man seemed to be deeply absorbed in his work. But he might chance to look up, and Miss Eliot believed in preparedness. She ducked behind her magazine, powdered her pretty little nose, gave a gentle pat to the golden fluffiness of her hair, and emerged looking much the same as before, but with an inward feeling that she was much improved.

"Absolutely!" Mr. Dunn was saying. "There never was a man living who could get James Jordan to tell a lie."

"I bet I could," said the impulsive Miss Eliot. She often followed the well-known speak-before-you-think rule.

"What is it, my dear?" asked her father.

"Nothing. Nothing at all. I was just thinking it would be so interesting to see all the vaults and everything. If somebody could show me around while you are talking——"

"Certainly," said Mr. Dunn, "certainly." He lifted the receiver of the desk telephone. "Tell Mr. Jordan to report to me at once." Turning back to Eliot, he resumed, "I'd hate to lose him, but I wouldn't stand in his way."

"Thanks," said Eliot. "I'll see him in a day or two and talk it over."

THE three men looked up as James Jordan entered the office. He was taller than Miss Eliot had thought. His carriage was graceful; his manner grave and courteous. But there was about him a subtle air of righteousness and piety that made her shudder.

"I wish he didn't look so honest," she thought.

Mr. Dunn introduced the youthful paragon all around and then asked him to show Miss Eliot about the bank. "She wants to see the vaults and time locks."

The paragon bowed solemnly and withdrew, while the fair sight-seer trotted along behind.

Usually Miss Eliot was equal to any situation, but now she felt embarrassed. This grave and comely young man was curiously attractive; she wanted him to look at her and admire her. But the thought of his supernatural goodness appalled her, and for once in her life she had nothing to say. She felt that her usual line of chatter would be out of place in his presence. It would seem like whistling or shouting in church.

They reached the door of the great vault and Mr. Jordan began his explanations. He spoke in an even and expressionless tone, much as if he were delivering a lecture to a body of scientists.

"The entire vault is made of the highest grade of alloy steel. It is surrounded by a two-foot layer of concrete. In this concrete is embedded a network of wires—" And so forth and so on ad infinitum nauseamque. Mr. Jordan's remarks were technical, tedious, and tiresome.

The audience was distinctly annoyed. She was not accustomed to such cold and impersonal treatment from young men. And she was much more interested in Mr. Jordan than she was in the vault.

"I suppose," she broke in suddenly, "you are just crazy about your work at the Y. M. C. A.?"

"Y. M. C. A.?"

"Yes, I thought you got quite a thrill out of those things."

"I do not belong to the Y. M. C. A."

"Nor to any of these other holy clubs or whatever they call them?"

"No," he replied, and finally added, "I belong to the Metropolitan Club."

"Oh!" said Miss Eliot with surprise. The Metropolitan was the best club in Akron. "Are you going to the tea dance there this afternoon?"

"Are you, Miss Eliot?"

"I expect to."

"Then I think I shall go. I have never attended these affairs before. My time has always been taken up by my work, but now——"

She felt that he was looking at her intently.

"What seems to be the trouble?" she asked.

She looked up quickly, and Mr. Jordan, blushing painfully, resumed his discourse concerning the vault.

"Well, well!" she said to herself. "This bird may be human after all." Again she interrupted him. "I have been wondering," she remarked. "Suppose you were on one of these old-fashioned trolley cars, where the conductor goes around; you know what I mean. And suppose he forgot to get your fare; would you chase after him and give him your nickel?"

"Certainly."

"But I mean, if he were way at the other end of the car? It's his job to gather in the fares. And if he forgets, that's no reason why you should fret yourself."

"It would not be right to take advantage of the conductor's neglect and ride without paying."

"All right, that's all I wanted to know. Go on and tell me about your old safe."

The apostle of truth and honesty went on with his dreary lecture.

RIGHT at this point an evil and sinister influence began to make itself felt. A soft little voice away down in Miss Eliot's subconscious mind began to talk. Modern psychologists would explain it by referring to hidden complexes and perverse desires in the subliminal self. But fundamentalists who believe in the good old-fashioned religion would have recognized the smooth and guileful accents of Satan himself.

The little voice spoke something like this: "Dorothy, old girl, you are getting to like this man, in spite of his absurd reputation. 'Truthful James,' indeed! Are you, a mature and sophisticated woman of twenty-two, going to swallow stuff like that? Don't let him kid you. He is probably just as much of a liar as anybody, and here he sets himself up to be a saint, a little pious tin god. And you are letting him get by with it. Pull yourself together, Dorothy, and show him up."

So spoke the little voice, sowing the seeds of future calamity.

The lecture was finally ended and lecturer and audience returned toward the front office. They prepared to seat themselves on a bench outside the barrier to await the end of the conference. On a hatrack by the bench was Mr. McGinnis's new straw hat. The little voice whispered a quick suggestion: "Now is your chance, while he's not looking."

Miss Eliot deftly removed the hat from its peg and slid it onto the bench. Mr. Jordan sat down. There was a sharp crackling. Mr. Jordan rose.

"Now you've done it," said Miss Eliot. "But never mind; we'll pretend we don't know anything about it." She gathered up all that was left of Mr. McGinnis's handsome hat, and hung the pitiful remains on the peg of the hatrack. She looked hopefully at James Jordan.

What, she wondered, would he do? Would he stand forth and say, "I cannot tell a lie; I did it with my little—" Well, no, he hadn't done it with a little hatchet. And besides, he seemed to be vacillating.

The conference was breaking up. Mr. Eliot and Mr. McGinnis were coming out. Young Jordan stepped forward.

"Mr. McGinnis," he said, "I must beg you to pardon me. A moment ago I accidentally sat on your hat, and I fear I have completely ruined it. I hope you will permit me to buy you another."

The silent McGinnis scowled, but finally brightened up and said, "All right."

So Mr. Eliot and his daughter went up the street in one direction while Jordan and the hatless McGinnis crossed over to a haberdashery.

Dorothy felt cross and fretful. The beautiful car which she and her father bought cheered her up a little. But when the garage man said it would not be ready for them to drive away until late afternoon, she got cross again. All the way home on the trolley car she was cross. And all through lunch she felt disgusted with life. But as the afternoon wore on, she was cheered by the thought that she would soon have another chance at James. Finally, at four o'clock, she entered the Metropolitan Club with a gleam in her eye, like a tiger stalking its prey.

The tea dance had started and Mr. Jordan was already there. He was standing in the hall talking to another young man, and Miss Eliot, coming from behind, was almost upon him before she recognized who it was.

"I never saw anything quite so absurd," she heard him say.

"Some hat!" remarked his companion.

She looked and saw that they were referring to a loud, cheap-looking lady's hat, which some eager dancer had discarded on one of the hall benches. Suddenly the soft little voice began to speak. This time it made another wicked suggestion. And Miss Eliot listened.

She stepped back and deposited her own hat on another bench; then advanced and put on the atrocity which James had been criticizing. Turning about, she smiled her sweetest into the unfortunate young man's face.

"DON'T you just *love* my new hat?" she gurgled, and added to herself: "Now then, George Washington, do you dare tell me to my face that you don't like it?"

Everybody's Magazine, February, 1924

The poor victim of this outrageous plot was a little startled. There was a long pause. But he was not entirely without brains, and suddenly he smiled.

"It does not do you justice," he said; and before she could reply he added, "Suppose we go in and dance."

So she removed the hat, and they danced, and the temptress had to admit another defeat.

Apparently Mr. Jordan had already been greatly impressed by Dorothy. For he had spent the hours from one to three taking a dancing lesson from the best instructor in Akron at the South Main Street Terpsichorean Palace. He wasn't really half bad. True, he was a bit heavy on his feet at first, and he held his partner very stiffly and as far away as possible. But then, he didn't walk on her feet, and he knew some of the very latest steps.

When they sat down, there was much pleasant talk. It appeared that Miss Eliot had spent her childhood in Akron, but had been away most of the time lately at school—Dana Hall and Vassar. The summers she had spent in Canada. So that she knew hardly any one in the old home town. Mr. Jordan admitted that he had lived all his life in Akron. It seemed probable that they had met at some time when they were children, so they chose to regard each other as old friends, and began to call one another James and Dorothy.

The little jazz orchestra started up again, and once more they danced. The provoking "blue" harmonies began to have their effect even on the sedate James. He drew his partner closer and moved through the measures of the dance with a new and curious abandon. He tightened his arm more and more. And then the saxophones came quavering down to silence through a long, lingering chromatic wail.

For a long moment he clung to her hand. Then they walked out into the hall, and found a place to sit down in a little alcove.

For a while they sat in silence.

Then Dorothy, glancing out into the hall, saw her father and Mr. McGinnis coming up the stairs from the front door. Mr. Eliot went on up the second flight toward the cloak room, while Mr. McGinnis remained behind, glancing about in a strangely furtive manner. The hall was for the moment deserted, and he did not see the couple in the alcove. He brought his umbrella around in front of him, unscrewed the handle, lifted it to his lips, and threw back his head. There was a faint gurgling sound.

Dorothy at once snapped to attention. Mr. McGinnis replaced the handle and leaned the umbrella against the wall behind the concealing folds of a large velvet curtain. After a guilty glance around, he sauntered carelessly up the stairs.

Again Dorothy began to hear the smooth little voice. "If only you could get Truthful James lit up a little——"

"You wait here, James," she commanded. She sneaked out and returned almost at once carrying the festive umbrella. It took but a moment to unscrew the handle.

"Here you are, James, old thing" she said. "Have one on me." She snapped open the cap and sniffed excitedly as a rich and not unpleasing aroma began to diffuse slowly through the atmosphere. "I believe it is the real old-fashioned stuff."

"I am sorry," James murmured, "but I never touch it."

The temptress smiled and fawned upon him. "Just one little drink won't hurt you," she pleaded.

"I think I had better not." James was wavering.

She slid a little closer, the better to employ her insidious wiles. She caressed his sleeve with her soft little hand, and started to bespeak him with honeyed words. But she stopped in alarm. Mr. McGinnis had returned; she could see him out in the hall, feeling around behind the velvet curtain.

"WHAT shall we do?" she whispered. "We have stolen Mr. McGinnis's umbrella."

"We?" blurted the bewildered James.

"Certainly. Can't you see? It's *his* umbrella, and he's looking for it."

The truth of this last assertion was only too evident. Mr. McGinnis was commencing a frantic search, pattering hither and thither, looking under chairs and benches. And his erratic course was bringing him ever nearer and nearer the alcove.

"Do something—do something! Quick!" said Dorothy. She grasped James by the arm and thrust the umbrella upon him.

McGinnis was working along down the hall at an alarming rate. But James seemed undecided and confused. He did nothing.

Dorothy put everything she had in one last piteous appeal. "James, *dearest*, save me!"

And James sprang to action. With the speed of an electron he grasped the umbrella. He screwed on the handle. He turned. He raised the window. He laid the stolen property on the outer sill. He closed the window and turned around just as the inquiring McGinnis came up.

"Pardon me," said McGinnis, with some embarrassment. "You haven't seen my umbrella around here, have you?"

Truthful James looked him square in the eye, and spoke with calmness and deliberation.

"No, I have not seen your umbrella."

Thus did James Jordan, called the Truthful, sell his soul for the love of a wicked woman.

Mr. McGinnis withdrew, and Dorothy squeezed James's hand, murmuring, "You old dear, I knew you would."

James cautiously opened the window. The umbrella was gone. Looking down, he saw a large awning which protected the window of the floor below. The umbrella had evidently slid off the sill, rolled out over the awning, and dropped into the street below.

"We had better go get it before somebody else takes it," he suggested.

"Yes, there might be somebody going by dishonest enough to steal an umbrella like that."

The two young people moved out into the hall, and descended to the street.

Parked at the curb was Dorothy's new automobile. Evidently, her father had driven it over to the club. It was a low sport-model touring-car. The temperamental Dorothy paused to admire her new and expensive toy. But James was more businesslike. He noted that the car was directly under the outer edge of the awning, and walking over, he discovered the merry old umbrella lying on the rear seat. But just as he was lifting it out he was startled by a stern voice behind him.

"What you doin' there?"

Turning about, he found himself confronted by a large, fat, red-faced policeman.

"I am getting my umbrella," said James.

"Is that your car?"

James hesitated, and Dorothy was about to explain the ownership, but the little inner voice suddenly spoke. "Better keep still. This might be good."

James drew himself up and met the policeman's suspicious glance with a look of perfect candor.

"Certainly, this is my car."

But the policeman was only half convinced. "I thought I saw an elderly gent comin' up in it," he said.

"That was my grandfather—he brings it down to me every afternoon." James spoke with a calm assurance that carried complete conviction.

The policeman grunted and passed on, while the two adventurers bore the umbrella back into the club.

Once inside the door they paused.

"I SUPPOSE," said James judicially, "that we lied to that policeman."

"James," said Dorothy, "you are a wonder."

"Well," said James with a flush of pride, "at least they were intelligent lies. They worked."

The door opened and the fat policeman reappeared.

"Aha!" he said. "Parked by a fire plug. Come out and move your car."

"What?" asked James stupidly.

"You heard me the first time. You're parked by a fire plug. Come out and move it."

The man spoke as one having authority. James followed him down the steps, while Dorothy, with some misgivings, tagged along behind.

As they approached the car, James became increasingly nervous. He was an accomplished driver of Fords, but he had never handled a machine like this. His mind became confused, and out of the confusion came a vague feeling that he ought to say something.

"That fire plug wasn't there five minutes ago," he remarked.

"Say, move that car."

"I'm sorry, but I think I must have left the key upstairs."

"What's that stickin' in the switch?"

It was indeed the key. James silently cursed the unknown owner who was so careless as to keys and parking places. He placed the umbrella on the rear seat and climbed in. Dorothy got in beside him, and the policeman, after taking out a notebook and pencil, went around behind.

"He's taking the number!" whispered Dorothy in alarm.

"Good for him!" said James.

He turned the switch, stepped on the starting button, and the motor began to purr. His courage revived. He pushed down the clutch pedal as he had seen others do, shoved the gear shift lever forward and to the left, opened the throttle, and let in the clutch. With a jerk the big car shot backward. There was a blood-curdling yell from the policeman as he was knocked flat.

James's mind became a mere chaos of tangled ideas. Somehow he got the gears shifted and the car rolled forward. Then with much clashing and grinding he got into high and stepped on the gas. Panic possessed him. He had killed a policeman! He must escape. The powerful machine went roaring up the quiet street like a Kansas tornado, veering wildly from side to side; scattering pedestrians and knocking over safety-zone signs; skidding madly around corners and passing one shouting traffic officer after another.

Dorothy let out one little yelp, and then clung to the seat in grim silence. On and on they went. James was surprised to find how deftly he could shoot in and out through the traffic. The car steered just like a flivver, but more easily. The puzzling gear shift bothered him no more; he was in high and he stayed in high. But his sanity began to return. He slowed down. He was entering the downtown section. He slowed down still more. Finally he slid gently around a corner into Main Street and stopped in front of the Akron National Bank. Far in the rear police whistles were blowing wildly as the traffic officers called for assistance from the motor-cycle forces.

"LET'S get out," said James. "I think," he added hopefully, "we can hide in here until the excitement calms down."

Dorothy drew her light scarf about her face. It made a curiously thick-looking veil, but, like most fugitives, she felt the need of a disguise. She and James were on the point of alighting when Mr. Dunn came walking sedately out of the bank.

It was Saturday afternoon and the bank was closed for business, but the president had been doing some work in his private office. He greeted James in his ponderous fashion.

"Is this your machine, Mr. Jordan?"

"Yes, sir."

"How fortunate!" Mr. Dunn glanced at his watch." I must catch the 5:05 train for Cleveland, and I see I have only twelve minutes. I hate to trouble you, but if you could drive me over to the station, it would help me greatly."

"Certainly," said James, glancing nervously down the street. "Get in quick."

He hustled him briskly into the rear seat, and away they went.

Mr. Dunn felt that he was sitting on some hard object. He reached back and pulled out a handsome umbrella. The handle was loose and a few drops of liquid were oozing out. Instinctively he sniffed; and then, scowling ominously, he sniffed again. How could a bank clerk afford such an expensive car? He started to question his employee.

But James had just glanced back and observed three motor-cycle policemen in full pursuit a block behind. He swung around a corner and once more stepped on the gas. In no time at all they reached the Union Station. But they did not stop at the Union Station. They shot right on across the bridge and thundered out Market Street in the general direction of Youngstown, Pittsburgh, and points east. The speedometer touched sixty-five.

"Stop, stop!" shouted Mr. Dunn.

The speedometer touched seventy. Mr. Dunn lost his hat. James suddenly jammed on the brakes and veered around into a side street. The motor-cycles were far behind. He doubled back toward town and finally turned into a scrubby little street near the railroad tracks. He drew up at the curb in front of a row of shabby brick dwelling houses. Dorothy drew a long breath. Mr. Dunn scrambled out with feverish haste. If he had been escaping from a den of lions he couldn't have gotten out any faster. He shook the umbrella at James.

"Mr. Jordan!" he shouted. "I believe you are intoxicated! I believe you are drunk!" His face was contorted with wrath. "What do you mean by this outrageous performance? What do you mean?

And what is this umbrella? What is this liquid?"

James contemplated the umbrella with innocent surprise. "Oh, that," he said easily, "is witch-hazel."

Mr. Dunn's whole form appeared to twitch and tremble. His face took on a purplish hue such as is often seen in sunsets painted by artists of the neo-vorticist school.

"Young man, nobody that lies or drinks can work for me. Your services will be no longer required at the bank."

Mr. Dunn tossed the umbrella into the rear seat, turned in a military manner, and strode off up the street.

"James," gasped Dorothy, in a horrified voice, "he has fired you!"

"That's how it seemed to me," admitted James.

"But, James, you mustn't be so reckless. And you tell such awful lies. I never——"

"Well, we can't sit here talking. Let's get out and walk off somewhere."

"But what about my—I mean what about the car?"

"What do we care about the car? Let's go." And taking her by the hand, James started in the direction of the railroad tracks. But almost at once the three motorcycle policemen came whizzing around the corner into the little street, and the two fugitives dodged into the vestibule of the nearest house. Peering cautiously through the glass of the door, they watched the police dash up and take possession of the car.

"James," said Dorothy, "you frighten me, you are so rash and impulsive."

THE door behind them opened and a large, severe-looking woman demanded, "What do you want?"

James turned and politely removed his hat. "Good afternoon, ma'am. How do you do? Nice weather we are having——"

"What do you want?" repeated the large woman. She appeared hostile.

"Oh, yes!" said James. "Pardon me. I want—what I mean is—I have come to read the gas meter."

"We use only electricity."

"I didn't say gas meter; I said electric meter."

The hostile female looked at him long and suspiciously. The fate of the two refugees hung in the balance. Finally she admitted them.

"James," whispered Dorothy through her veil, "James, please, you mustn't tell such lies."

The woman closed the door behind them, and stood staring inquiringly at Dorothy. James at once volunteered an explanation.

"This is my wife; she comes along for the exercise."

The woman of the house shrugged her shoulders and walked down the hall to show the way. A hoarse and ferocious whisper came from Dorothy.

"Don't you dare! I don't want you *ever* to call me your wife. I hate you and your lies."

The angry Dorothy remained behind while James followed the large woman down the cellar steps.

The electric meter was behind a pile of coal. James, as he climbed across, noticed that a manhole over his head was open. What he did not notice was that out in the alley a truck-load of coal was ready to be put in. The driver pulled the lever of the dumping mechanism just about the time James reached the meter. There was a threatening rumble, and with a roar the coal came thundering down through the manhole. James was caught between the wall and the plunging black avalanche. Only by the liveliest scrambling was he able to keep from being buried. After what seemed like several hours, the uproar gradually ceased, and James wiped the dirt from his eyes.

Peering through the thick, dust-laden air, he saw a policeman descending the cellar steps. It took James three seconds to reach the top of the pile of coal, two seconds to pull himself up through the manhole, and one second to replace the manhole cover.

Blinking his eyes in the sudden sunlight, he glanced about. The alley was deserted except for the driver of the truck, who was on the seat busily engaged in reversing the dumping mechanism. James himself was black with coal dust.

A policeman came around the corner of the house. James grabbed a shovel from the ground, and began scraping up a few lumps. A moment later the blue-clad figure was at his side.

"You ain't seen a young feller and a girl runnin' away down here?"

James continued scraping. He was standing on the manhole cover; he could feel a futile tapping from beneath. He shrugged his shoulders and raised a coal-blackened face.

"No speaka da Engleesh," he said.

"Damn these foreigners," growled his questioner. Looking up, he spied the driver on the seat. "Hey, you!" he cried. "Seen a young feller and a girl runnin' down through here?"

"No," said the driver.

The policeman returned to the front of the house.

James dropped the shovel and sprinted away in the opposite direction. He doubled around through the railroad yards and finally reached a corner whence he could look into the scrubby little street where he had left the car.

Peeking cautiously around, he saw that the police were just driving it away. Then his heart sank as he observed Dorothy being led out of the house and placed in a waiting patrol wagon. There was a clang of the bell, and his partner in crime was whisked away—to the police station, no doubt.

JAMES'S mind was paralyzed with horror. Never before had he known such a feeling of helpless despair. It was all his fault. She had trusted him and he had failed her. What a good sport she was! She had stuck to him through all that fearful flight. The thought of deserting had never entered her loyal heart. And now she was in the dread clutches of the law.

He started running after the fast disappearing patrol. But he could not hope to catch it. Then he thought of Dorothy's father. Mr. Eliot was mayor of Akron; he could do something. James turned into a little grocery store, found the telephone number and took down the receiver.

"Summit 4-4-7-8. . . . Hello! Hello, is Mr. Eliot there?"

"No."

"Is this Mr. Eliot's house?"

"Yah."

"Well, where is Mr. Eliot?"

"I tank he ban downtown."

"But where is he? Where can I get him?"

"I tank somebody steal his automobile. I tank he go to police station."

James hung up the receiver. The police station was about half a mile distant. He ran all the way. As he drew near, he noticed the car parked in front. Dorothy must be inside.

He rushed up the steps, burst open the door, and breathlessly accosted the captain at the desk.

"Is Mr. Eliot here?"

"No."

"Never mind then. Let her out. Let her out. *I* am the criminal."

James pounded on the desk with one coal-blackened hand; with the other he wiped the perspiration from his coal-blackened face. The startled captain jumped up in alarm.

The door opened and Mr. Eliot entered. James, still very much out of breath, turned about.

"Mr. Eliot!" he gasped. "Tell them to let her out. I did it! I did it!"

He sank exhausted on a bench. The captain sidled around and touched a bell. Two patrolmen entered.

"Search him," commanded the captain. "See if he has any weapons. And look out; he may get violent."

James was promptly seized and searched. His pocketbook, watch and other belongings were placed on the desk.

"All right," said the captain, fixing him with his eye, "what's your name?"

"James Jordan."

"What!" cried Mr. Eliot. He stepped forward and peered into the grimy face. It was true. The kindly Mr. Eliot was profoundly shocked.

"Captain," he said, "this is indeed a sad case. I know this young man, and I am at a loss to know what has happened."

"I tell you I stole the automobile," said James. "I committed the murder."

"Calm yourself," said Mr. Eliot kindly, "and tell us what you mean."

"Let her out! Let her out!"

"It is possible," suggested the captain, "that he refers to your daughter."

"My daughter?"

"Yes, I called you up about it a few minutes ago, but I was told you were already on your way here. I assumed that you had heard of the affair."

"What affair? I came to report the theft of my automobile. But evidently you have recovered it——"

"Quite so, quite so. It is possible that my men have been a little overzealous. But I am sure, Mr. Eliot, that we can clear up the misunderstanding. Hogan, bring in Miss Eliot."

ONE of the policemen withdrew and returned in a moment with Dorothy.

She started to run to her father, but stopped as she noticed the piteous figure before the desk.

"Why, James!" she cried. "What has happened to you? You're all smudged up. They haven't arrested you, have they?"

"Yes, but it doesn't matter. They will let you go now. I stole the automobile. I killed the policeman. I will go to jail. It was all my fault."

"It was *not* your fault. It was mine. Father, make them let him go. He didn't do a thing. He thinks he stole an automobile. But he didn't. And just because the umbrella fell off the window sill is no reason to put him in jail. And it isn't as if he meant to kill the policeman. The policeman made him start up the car, and then got in the way just on purpose to get run over and make trouble. And that horrid Mr. Dunn has fired him for no reason at all. And I'm glad he missed his train to Cleveland. Father, make them let him go."

"But Dorothy, my dear, I don't understand. You must explain——"

"I am explaining, but you won't listen. Can't you understand? He took the automobile, but he didn't steal it. James, you think you stole it, but you didn't." She turned to the captain. "Please let him go, Mr. Policeman. You don't know how good he is. He's a regular saint—or at least he was. You can ask them at the bank. They all call him 'Truthful James.' "

" 'Jesse James' might be better."

"Oh, you don't understand at all," wailed Dorothy. "Father, make them let him go."

"Now, let's get this straight," said the bewildered Mr. Eliot. "Just what did you do?"

"Nothing at all," said Dorothy. "We just borrowed the umbrella for a minute. And then we took it for a little ride. And now they arrest us. It's unjust."

"But what about the automobile?"

Dorothy drew her father to one side. "Father," she whispered, "it's our automobile—it's my automobile. But James doesn't know it. But, oh, dear, can't you see, we can't tell him now? Because if you let him know that you know that I know it's my car, he would hate me, and I would just die. He would think that I lied to him, which I didn't at all, because I never told him I didn't know; I just didn't tell him I did know."

Mr. Eliot regarded his daughter severely. "Dorothy," he said, "I am ashamed of you. What have you been doing to this poor boy?" He turned to the captain. "They didn't steal the car. It belongs to my daughter. I bought it for her this morning."

Dorothy glanced from her father's severe face to the police captain. He too was frowning darkly. She turned to James. But James appeared amazed, hurt, indignant.

"Oh, dear!" she said. "You're all turning against me." A large lonesome tear went coursing down her cheek. James at once sprang to her side.

"Don't," he said. "I won't turn against you."

Mr. Eliot's face gradually relaxed. "Captain," he said, "you cannot hold her for stealing her own car. And you cannot hold him for helping her."

"No," admitted the captain, "I suppose not."

"And now what is this I hear about a murder?"

"Wait a minute," said the captain. "Tell Mulligan to come in."

WHEN Mulligan entered, he proved to be the fat, hard-boiled policeman. He seemed none the worse for his adventure in front of the Metropolitan Club.

"Is that the policeman you murdered?" asked the captain.

"Yes," said James.

"How do you feel, Mulligan?" asked the captain.

"A little shook up, sir."

Mr. Eliot drew Mulligan to one side, and whispered in his ear. What he said was not audible to any one else, and it is uncertain whether he used gentle persuasion, cold logic, or some form of base bribery. At any rate, Mulligan was seen to smile.

"It's all right," he announced. "He didn't hurt me. I got no complaint to make."

"And now," said Mr. Eliot, "as there seem to be no further charges against these young people, I assume that you will release them."

The captain thought of all the flagrantly violated traffic laws. But a request from His Honor the Mayor is not to be lightly disregarded.

"They may go," he said.

Upon reaching the street, James took leave of the mayor and his daughter.

"Thank you, Mr. Eliot," he said sadly, "and good-by."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know. To look for a job, I guess."

With a last mournful look at Dorothy, he turned and crept away.

"And now," said Mr. Eliot to his daughter, "what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Why, father, I thought you were going to give him a job!"

"I was, but——"

"Father, you've got to give him a job. Because it's all our fault that he lost his other one."

"Our fault?"

"Certainly; who was it that parked the car by that fire plug? You've got to give him a job. If you don't I'll never forgive myself. It'll ruin my life. I'll enter a convent. I'll be a monk or an Episcopalian or something. I will. I will. Please call him back, father. Please—please!" Dorothy was becoming quite frantic.

"Well," said her father, "knowing you as I do, Dorothy, I can assuredly sympathize with this unfortunate young man. I can well believe that you would corrupt Saint Anthony himself." He raised his voice. "Mr. Jordan! Oh, Mr. Jordan!"

The retreating figure turned and with halting steps came back.

"Mr. Jordan," said Eliot, "as you probably know, I am organizing a new company, to be known as the Akron Rubber Corporation. I have decided to offer you the position of treasurer."

James opened his mouth. He closed his mouth.

"The salary," continued Eliot, "will be seven thousand a year to start."

"But why," burbled James, "should you choose me?"

"I need a man who understands banking and finance—and you do. I need a man with initiative and energy—the three-ring circus you have put on this afternoon proves you have them. And I need an honest man—after to-day I believe I need have no fears in that direction. I believe you have learned a lesson. Am I right?"

"You are right."

"Good! Get in the car, and we'll drive out to the house and talk it over. No, never mind your clothes."

James and Dorothy got in the rear seat. Mr. Eliot drove.

"OH, JAMES!" sighed Dorothy. "I am so glad you are to have this position. I smeared it on as thick as I dared about how honest you were. I wanted to get you out. Because in a way I suppose it was partly my fault. But, oh, James!" She turned to him with a serious expression. "I am so troubled about you. You have such wicked tendencies. I never knew anybody so strong, so virile, and yet so horribly wicked. Promise me, James, that you will fight against your evil impulses. There is so much in you that is noble, and fine, and—and wonderful, that you mustn't let your baser nature prevail. You must use your will power. You must be brave."

"I'll try."

"What you need"—she slid a little closer—"what you need in your life is the influence of some pure woman."

"Yes," agreed James, "if only—" He suddenly caught sight of Mr. McGinnis walking along the sidewalk. "Stop a minute, Mr. Eliot," he called.

The machine drew up to the curb, and James handed out the umbrella.

"I cannot tell a lie," he said; "I have seen your umbrella."

The astonished McGinnis took his property, and the car moved on.

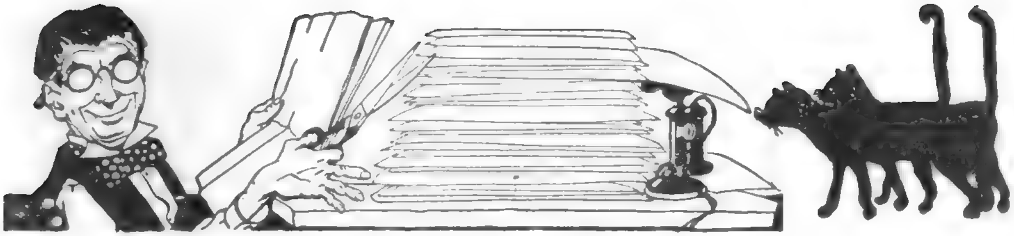
"If only you would help me," said James, "I feel that I could live a better life."

"But, James, dearest, perhaps I am unworthy. I once told a dreadful lie myself."

"When?"

"When I said I didn't ever want you to call me your wife."

And when Mr. Eliot turned around a little later, he saw that there was almost as much coal dust on Dorothy's face as on James's.



Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

In Vesey Street, N. Y.: "*Basement to let; fifth floor.*" (MRS. J. H. O.)
Heard on street car, Chicago: "*Yes, my wife is sick. She has an attack of diagnosis.*"
In Chicago furniture store: "*A cozy porch has kept many a girl from being an old maid.*"
On Trumbull Street, Hartford, Conn.: "*Trading here is like making love to a widow—you can't overdo it.*"
Lake Street, Chicago, bank announcement: "*We make the interest of our depositors our interest.*"
In Minneapolis *Daily News:* "*All Wood Union Suits.*" (Gosh! The splinters!)
On Larrabee Street, Chicago: "*Ladies wanted to shell nuts.*"
On Irving Park Boulevard, Chicago: "*Gall & Co., Monuments.*" (Gall stones?)
Advertisement of Chicago firm: "*Leading tail lights for motorcycles.*"
In Des Moines: "*Locust Chop House.*" (Wild honey on the side?)
Witness in case at Waukegan, Ill., police court: "*Mrs. I. Glass.*"
In Hartford store window: "*Coffee good from the grounds up.*"
In Fort Atkinson, Wis.: "*Loek & Wisch, Grocers.*"
In Chicago: "*I. Keer, Shoe Repairing.*"
In Cedar Rapids, Iowa: "*Miss Allie Crow, President of the Linn County Bird Club.*"

(Sign on Sixth Avenue, New York)

"Umbrellas 98c. Up."

I wonder how much cheaper they are down?

(Hartford Courant)

"Undertakers Plan Journey."

Business must be slow.

(Bloomington Pantagraph)

PERSONAL—Young widow 34 wants to correspond with gentleman under 40; must have conveniences.

Money, evidently, no object.

(Kansas City Star)

"Thirty Women Employes Were Vaccinated, Three on the Arm."

Oh, well, let it go at that.

(Brantford, Ont., Courier)

Mr. Pepper of Chicago spent a day of this week with Mr. and Mrs. Robert Snowball.

Immortals communing.

(Chicago Daily News)

"I saw in the *Daily News* some treatment for hives. I cut them out but lost them." MRS. L. J. K——, Iowa.

A good way to keep them is to string 'em and use 'em for a necklace.

(River Forest Presbyterian)

Ralph Scarritt, dressed in his fishing pants, except when he was whittling, tore loose on the mouth-organ and recited Riley's "April Weather."

An Illinois orgy.

(Franklin, Ind., Star)

Miss Jane Lunch of Fostoria, O., who has been a guest at the house of C. H. Drybread, returned home to-day.

Well, I don't blame her a bit.

(Aledo, Ill., Times-Record)

Several horses belonging to A. S. McKinney, Girard liveryman, were stricken the other day with a strange melody.

Sure, the kind we boys used to play on a horsehair fiddle.

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(Oskaloosa Herald)

Mr. and Mrs. John Beagle left this morning for Norwalk, where they will be guests with their daughter, Mrs. Seth Canine.

What, again? Why, they fairly hound that girl of theirs!

(Community Builder, Chicago)

Brother Culp was with us last Sunday for the first time since the birth of his baby. He is looking quite well. Glad he is able to be out again.

Isn't the moonlight on the water just heavenly to-night?

(Headline)

Bride Shoots Herself—Husband Says Pair Had Quarreled over Selection of Frame for Their Marriage Certificate.

We'll now sing two verses of that old, sweet song, "There's a Picture That Is Turned Against the Wall."

(From letter to a Chicagoan)

"Thank you, dear, for your sweet birthday greeting. I received many loving messages and remembrances. Frank gave me a big load of manure for the front yard. Last year he gave me two hind tires and a gas stove. The children are well, etc., etc."

Next year he will probably give her a silo, or put a new roof on the woodshed.

(Beatrice, Nebr., Sun)

Mrs. Benjamin Stroot arranged a birthday party for her husband here last night and invited a large number of his friends. During the course of the merrymaking Mrs. Stroot gave birth to a son.

"Merry, indeed," quoth Charlie Chaplin, as he threw another custard pie at Ben, across the table.

(West Coast Lumberman)

George Startup, of the Wallace Lumber & Manufacturing Co., Sultan, Washington, has purchased a large, black Ford touring car.

Now we will just have to widen the roads.

(Sanford, S. C., Express)

Ike Clark died Thursday night at his home near Pittsboro. He will be remembered by many as having a hearty laugh and a still heartier stomach, winning wagers by his capacity for devouring pounds of soda crackers, eating bunches of bananas, and such kindred eating stunts. He was the champion eater of the county, and a checker player of local renown.

"And the *gobble*-uns 'll git you ef you don't watch out."

(Rec'd by a watch manufacturer)

"By bearer I am sending you one of your bracelet watches which we sold to a lady a couple of days ago. When she went to take a bath she took off everything except her bracelet watch. Please let me know as soon as possible how much you will charge to put it in good order."

That's funny; being in "soak" never hurt mine.

(Chicago Post)

G. L.—"What is the cause of gas on the stomach?" lacUso. opolbm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm bm

Yes, I know, but why don't you answer his question?

(Williamston, S. C., News)

The friends of Mr. J. C. Wilson regret to learn that he is slowly recovering from a recent illness.

How they *love* that man!

(Whitewater, Wis., Register)

Miss Childs, Mrs. Scott Hatch and Miss May Spencer, Edgerton's Lady Jeweler, drove over from Edgerton the first of the week to be fitted to Henderson Corsets at The White House Store.

They oughter laid in a stock of President Suspenders, also.

(Hancock, Mich., Journal)

Luckily a carload of oats which were being received for the winter and which had not arrived as yet were not here as they also would have been among the loss.

Clear, perfectly clear.

(Columbus, Ind., Republican)

Frank Spurgeon, who was seriously injured in a fight on Third Street Saturday night, is improved so that he is able to sit on his veranda.

Lucky he wasn't hit on the porch.

(St. Paul Pioneer Press)

WANTED—A second-hand portable garage, large enough for a Ford car.

Satchel type, with handles, preferred.

(Little Rock Gazette)

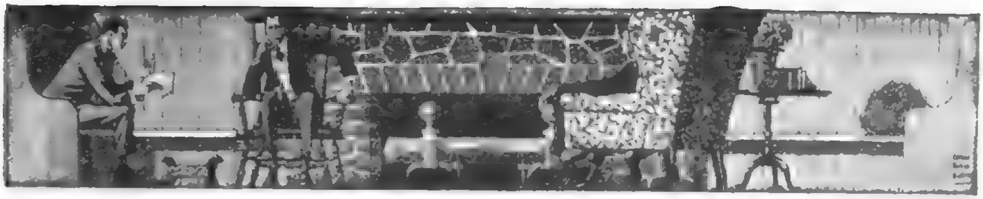
It is remarkable how few men who follow guitar playing for a living get rich.

Much less get away with their lives.

(Tannersville, N. Y., Times-Record)

Delphin Hommel has had the cold that most every one has had around here.

Who's next?



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

MRS. HONORÉ WILLSIE MORROW, whose novel, "The Devonshers," begins in the next issue of EVERYBODY'S, remarks that "one of the most discouraging aspects of novel-writing is the fact that the writer must deal with set notions." Her letter continues:

> There is a set notion as to what a mystery ought to contain, as to how an historical romance should be written. And no novel of realism is supposed to be worthy the name that does not handle some aspect of sex life and handle it without gloves. Yes, the curse of the label is heavy these days on the novelist's head. Give the book a label and it is either hung or placed in the first-seller class even before it has been read.
>
> My own worst affliction is that I've been labeled a writer of Western novels. And undoubtedly the set notion about the Western novel is the most set notion in the field of literature. It works in this wise: Any novel with a locale west of the Missouri River is a Western novel. As such it must contain cowboys, gun play and a dialect that never was heard on sea or land; also much of the vaudeville type of humor. Containing the above ingredients, it cannot be looked upon as a serious artistic effort. Therefore no serious novelist will write a Western novel. Therefore no novel of Western material is to be looked upon as a real comment on life. And there I am!
>
> HERE'S another book I've written, with a Wyoming background. It contains neither cowboys nor dialect. It's about human beings acted and reacted upon by a vast natural environment. As nearly as I can discover, I'm without class as a novelist! I wonder if it would do any good if I tried to explain myself. One of the great fascinations the Rocky Mountain country has for me is the fact that it still shows the great trails of immigration. Not the Ellis Island kind of migration; but the movement west of a breed of soil-hungry Nordics. These people have a never-ending fascination for me, partly because I am of that breed myself and partly because the wonder and the beauty of that migration appeal to whatever there may be of the artist in me. And so, after every trip I make to the Big Country, I try to tell the story of some different aspect which I have learned of the great trail-making. What did that mighty trek, for example, do to the grandchildren of the people who made it? How do these grandchildren with their heritage of trail-making accommodate themselves to the strictures of civilization? I know many of the descendants, for example, of the Oregon Trail folk. Because their ancestry is such as it is, there is unique drama in their lives. And in "The Devonshers" I have tried to draw their picture. But I warn all and sundry that it contains none of the ingredients that are required to make a Western novel!

WE THINK a great deal of the racing stories by Sam Carson which begin in this number. They picture what we think of as the human side of the race-track. The first one, "For Sake of a Lady," appears on page 36.

> It's a pleasure to write racing fiction [says Mr. Carson] because that weirdly contrasting section of humanity lives for but one thing—the thoroughbred. Somebody once wrote a story about a crooked jockey, a contorted owner, and a girl—and that version seems to persist in being the picture of turfdom. Well, it isn't—not by a jugful. I think there are far more—children of the stables, and finely dressed women in the clubhouse—who see racing as the elderly lady who hasn't missed the last twenty Derbies. "When I die," she announced one day, "I want to be buried at the head of the home stretch—where the horses come thundering around the turn of the track. I want to be buried there, so I can hear them—and the crowds roaring." That is the spirit of the thing, something more than a sport—it is the horses.

AS TO his own life, Mr. Carson writes:

> Mexico and Canada, the Dakotas and Colorado—and, yes, Europe, for nearly two years—I've been there, not knowing exactly why I was shifting,

Mrs. Honoré Willsie Morrow, whose new serial, "The Devonshers," begins in March *Everybody's*, and who gives in Chimney Corner an interesting sidelight on the problems of an author.

hoboing, always moving on. Not until the end of Uncle Sam's European tour, when I decided to go back into the newspaper game. Now I believe it was to know people, their strange ways in places the map and books gathered at my starting-point at the foot of the Cumberlands—Tennessee Cumberlands—spoke of.

TALBERT JOSSELYN ("The Golden Grove," page 143) has had a shot at mining, ranching, war and writing.

The mining phase of my life began [he says] when I was three years old, or thereabouts, on Mount Baldy in southern California, an experience hazily recollected as being made up of nettles, chipmunks, and the sight of a grand stream of water belching from the nozzle of a monitor and knocking away the face of a cliff. No gold was found. No gold in amount worth minting was thereafter found, though the intermittent search, spread through school and college and ranching, went from central Idaho to southern Mexico.

But though the prospecting pick uncovered no metal, it came upon other things: Idaho in the spring-time, with the quaking asps all silvery-leafed in the river bottoms, and the Sawtooth Mountains ragged against a sunset sky; eastern Oregon, where from one peak, across a world of forest green, five thumb-nails of white showed above its western rim—Rainier and Hood and others, two hundred miles away. Two summers the camp was at the base of the Shasta, among singing pines and beside a stream that gushed ice-cold from the earth. Other summers were passed along the uplands of the Nevada-California line above the Colorado River, where the tallest tree, a juniper, might be but twenty feet high, and where water had to be dug out of the rock, and then might prove to be arsenic.

A WIDE, roofless country, this latter, and colored like a box of paints, tawny mountains, red mountains, black ones; a metal-blue sky, and flowers in springtime that ran from red ones by the twenty acres on the flat land to the magenta and terra-cotta and salmon pink of different cacti clinging between rocks. Here blossomed and withered a number of mining camps, one going from nothing to many men and talk of a weekly newspaper back to nothing again; and the gold is still there, if one can but find it. A land of hope and failure and more hope, and morning leaping bright across the world, noontime drowsing in flickering waves of heat, evening coming across the hills all purple and orange.

Writing? I've been at it, off and on, for the last dozen years, the off part being due to ranching, mining and war. Now, here beside the western sea, where the hills hang high above the Pacific and the tides come swinging across twice a thousand leagues and more of ocean, the on part of writing seems to have become pretty well established.

WILLIAM H. UPSON ("Truthful James," page 165) does not, we are informed upon authority, know how to say anything interesting about himself. But there follows a contribution, largely a collaboration, which may be accepted as fairly trustworthy. It comes from his friend, William Almon Wolff.

I regard Bill Upson as my literary godson, and I'm proud of him. I discovered that he could write by hearing him talk, and I claim just this much credit for his development—that I used duress to make him write exactly as he talked. He had had vague literary ambitions, but they had been discouraged and aborted by teachers who tried to instruct him in style, rhetoric, technique and other abominations. So much for that. Upson came into my life when he took quarters in a flat immediately above mine. He was in New York that winter to teach firemen, policemen and street cleaners how to run the caterpillar tractors his firm had sold the city for snow-removal work.

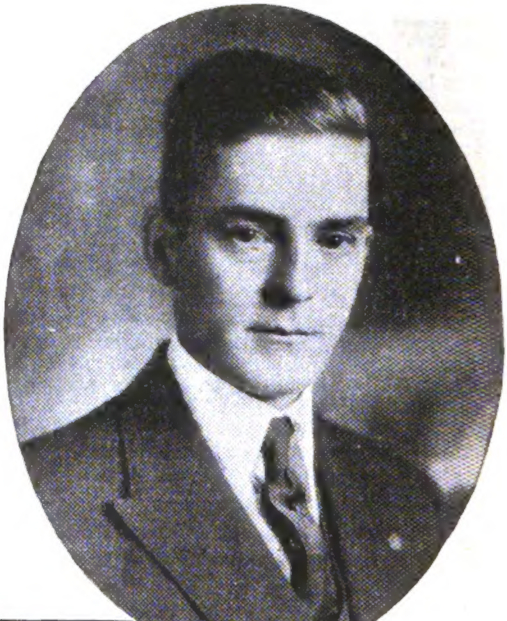
THE high spot of that winter came, for me, on a day when I went home to find the street blocked by a cheering mob. Upson had gathered it by driving up to our door in one of the tractors, hauling a load of firewood. He had been appalled by the discovery of how much we were paying for logs and, having any amount of wood at his disposal at the yard, had decided to bring some home. It never even occurred to him that any one would regard the event as spectacular. If he had ever happened to want to drive a young lady uptown for tea, he would have called for her in a tractor, too. That's Upson.

ETHEL WATTS MUMFORD, whose unusual story, "Mine," appears on page 78, says in writing a sketch of herself:

There are persons born to storm. I am one of them. I must have started earthward on the wings of a typhoon. Melodrama is my middle name—battle, murder and sudden death; rich, flat broke; revolution, earthquake; smashed. I have, I think, a whole skeleton, but it must look marcelled to the X-ray eye. There are a few countries that have so far escaped my wandering foot, but when I arrive they'll locate diamond mines or dispose of the ruler, be visited by a tornado or something equally soothing. The strangest thing that ever happened to me is that during the late war I never got near the front. Instead, I traveled alone into the remote northern trails—on a job, to be sure, but about the last one I expected to be intrusted with. However, to offset the terrors of battle that I missed, I had the aftermath of the Halifax explosion and the devastation of the flu epidemic, so I managed my quota of excitement when in Canada, even if my pen was considered mightier than my sword, and I waged war with my ink only. I haven't been killed yet, but I'm saving that for the finish. I can't say I can call this "the best of all possible worlds," but I'll say it's a lively one.

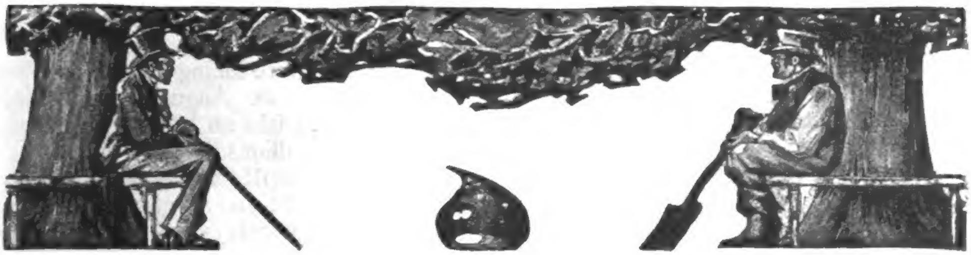
I have but one hatred, a real phobia—the Volstead act. I would not feel that I was an American, or honest, or even semi-intelligent, if I did not fight it in every possible way, and get every one I can to join every association in opposition to it. Don't start me on this—I'd write a book.

Talbert Josselyn ("The Golden Grove," page 143) has had a varied experience in his beloved West—prospecting, ranching and just plain camping out.



Sam Carson ("For Sake of a Lady," page 36), a newspaper man, from the foot of the Cumberlands has gone pretty much through North America and Europe, learning to know people. And now he's writing about those he knows best.

One wouldn't think, just from looking at her, that Ethel Watts Mumford ("Mine," page 78) was a hoodoo; but she boasts of it.



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

***Editor's Note:** Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.*

"UNCLE LOUIS," said little Eleanor, "do you know that a baby that was fed on elephant's milk gained twenty pounds in a week?"

"Nonsense! Impossible!" exclaimed Uncle Louis. "Whose baby was it?"

"The elephant's baby," remarked little Eleanor.

THE mistress was annoyed by the repeated calls of a certain negro on her colored cook.

"You told me," she protested to the cook, "that you had no man friends. But this fellow is in the kitchen all the time."

"Dat nigger, he hain't no friend o' mine," the cook declared scornfully. "Him, he's jes' my 'usban'."

"AH," SAID the doctor, looking into one eye, "it is easy for me to see what is the matter with you! This is not merely eye trouble; it is an affection of the nervous system. There are all the signs of liver trouble, of fatty degeneration of the heart, of a bad blood supply. The only thing I can recommend is——"

"Here, here!" cried the patient. "Isn't it about time you looked into the other eye? That's my glass one, you know."

"FORE!" shouted the golfer, preparing for a big swipe.

But the woman who was crossing the links paid no attention.

"Fore!" yelled the man angrily.

Still she took no notice.

"Try three-ninety-eight," suggested a friend. "Perhaps she's a bargain hunter."

TO THE prohibition office of a New Jersey city there went the Reverend Mr. Ellis, shepherd of a dark flock.

"Well, Reverend, what can I do for you?"

"Well, suh, I wants—ah—now—some of that sacrilegious wine."

"Oh, a permit for sacramental wine! All right, Reverend, red or white?"

Confidentially leaning forward, the Reverend Mr. Ellis said: "Well, suh, my congregation done tak' a vote, and we-all decided on gin!"

WHAT a widow means to some Boston primary children:

A lady with lots of money.
A lady who takes in washing.
A lady whose father is dead.
A man who has no wife.
A lady who sits by the window and sews.
A lady who is married and her husband dies and she marries again.

AN OLD darky got up in meeting one night and said: "Bredders an' sisters, you know an' I know dat I ain' been what I oughter been. I's robbed hen-roosts and stole hogs, and tol' lies, an' got drunk, an' slashed folks with my razo', an' shot craps an' cussed an' swore, but I thank de Lord dere's one thing I ain't nebber done—I ain't nebber lost mah religion."

OF ALL the words infolonel,
You see in book or jolonel,
  Which seem to me
  An oddity
Is the title we spell Colonel.

A YOUNG man and a maiden were playing golf and had reached a hole where the green lay on the top of a little hill. The youth ran up first to see the lie of the balls.

"A stymie!" he shouted. "A dead stymie!"

Whereupon the young woman, who was very much of a novice, came up with a sniff. "Well, do you know," said she, "I thought I smelled something as I was walking up the hill."

RASTUS, on his first ocean voyage, was feeling the pangs of sea-sickness.

"Ho, ho!" taunted his companion. "You am a landlubbah, fo' sho'."

"Right, boy," said Rastus, weakly. "An' I's jes' findin' out how much I really lubs it."

OLE SVENSON, a son of the silent North, after having lived by himself and prepared his own meals for thirty years, had taken a wife. Mrs. Svenson proceeded to live with her husband for the better part of two months, after which she ran away to the city.

"Well, Ole," said a friend some time after the lady's departure, "are you sorry she went?"

"No," replied Ole.

"No? Why not?"

"Vell," was the reply, "she vas alvays getting in de vay ven I vas cooking."

UNCLE BILL WALKER, who lived at the foot of Great Smoky, became an easy convert to the propaganda of Mormon missionaries. His brother Sammie, an old magistrate of considerable means and great influence in the coves of the Smokies, was eagerly sought after as a "prospect." Squire Sammie was sitting on his front porch one afternoon when two elders of the new faith came up from the road.

"Brother Walker," one of them began courteously, "we have come to tell you about the Church of the Latter Day Saints, and we should like to leave some tracts for you to look over."

"That's all right, gentlemens," the old mountaineer replied without even taking his pipe from his mouth. "You-uns is welcome to leave all the tracks you want to, jist so's the toes of 'em is p'intin' t'wards yan gate!"

TWO darkies were lolling in the shade one hot afternoon in August. Said Mose drowsily: "Ah wisht ah had a whole truckload of watahmillions."

SAM (rousing up): Say, Mose, if you had that many, would you all gimme a couple?

MOSE (indignantly): No, you shif'luss niggah! Wish fo' yo' own watahmillions!

CLYDE YOUNGHORSE, a young Indian suddenly oil-rich, bought himself a $5,000 automobile and drove away. Next day the salesman was confronted by Younghorse again. The Indian was afoot, walked with a limp and bore various contusions and bruises. This was his explanation:

"Drive out big car; buy gallon moonshine; take big drink; step on gas. Trees and fences go by heap fast. Pretty quick see big bridge coming down road. Turn out to let bridge pass. Bang! Car gone! Gimme another one."

IRATE GENTLEMAN: Say, who are you serenading down there?

INTOXICATED RASTUS: Nobody 'n particular. Ah's jes' broadcastin'."

MISS FEATHERS, instructing a class in English, called upon nine-year-old Tommy Wiggins.

"Thomas," she said, "write on the board, 'John can ride the mule if he wants to.'"

That Thomas proceeded to do to the satisfaction of all concerned.

"Now," continued Miss Feathers when Thomas had returned to his place, "can you find a better form for that sentence?"

"Yes, ma'am, I think I can," was the prompt response of Tommy. "John can ride the mule if the mule wants him to."

THE medium had aroused much interest throughout the crowded hall by reading a newspaper through a thick black cloth while blindfolded. The judges examined the bandage over his eyes and doubled the cloth over the newspaper, but he still read with ease anything placed before him.

At this juncture a colored woman arose and started toward the door.

"You aren't leaving, are you, aunty?" inquired a lady who had employed her.

"I suah is," replied aunty. "Dis heah am no place foh a respec'able colo'ed woman with nothin' on but a thin calico dress!"